





Fri. K. & J. Jones

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# DICKENS' NEW STORIES.

CONTAINING

THE SEVEN POOR TRAVELLERS. NINE NEW STORIES BY THE CHRISTMAS FIRE. HARD TIMES. LIZZIE LEIGH. THE MINER'S DAUGHTERS. FORTUNE WILDRED, ETC.

## BY CHARLES DICKENS.

("B O Z.")

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR, ENGRAVED ON STEEL.

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DICKENS' NEW STORIES. Containing—  
THE SEVEN POOR TRAVELLERS. NINE  
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HARD TIMES. LIZZIE LEIGH. THE MINER'S DAUGHTERS. FORTUNE WILDRED,  
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FROM ITALY.

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## SEVEN POOR TRAVELLERS.

## THE FIRST POOR TRAVELLER.

STRICTLY speaking, there were only six Poor Travellers; but, being a Traveller myself, though an idle one, and being withal as poor as I hope to be, I brought the number up to seven. This word of explanation is due at once; for what says the inscription over the quaint old door?

RICHARD WATTS, Esq.,  
by his Will, dated 22 Aug., 1579,  
founded this Charity  
for Six poor Travellers,  
who not being ROGUES or PROCTORS,  
May receive gratis for one Night,  
Lodging, Entertainment,  
and Four-pence each.

It was in the ancient little city of Rochester, in Kent, of all the good days in the year upon a Christmas Eve, that I stood reading this inscription over the quaint old door in question. I had been wandering about the neighboring Cathedral, and had seen the tomb of Richard Watts, with the effigy of worthy Master Richard starting out of it like a ship's figure-head; and I had felt that I could do no less, as I gave the Verger his fee, than inquire the way to Watts's Charity. The way being very short and very plain, I had come prosperously to the inscription and the quaint old door.

"Now," said I to myself, as I looked at the knocker, "I know I am not a Proctor; I wonder whether I am a Rogue!"

Upon the whole, though Conscience reproduced two or three pretty faces which might have had smaller attraction for a moral Goliath than they had had for me, who am but a Tom Thumb in that way, I came to the conclusion that I was not a Rogue. So, beginning to regard the establishment as in some sort my property, bequeathed to me and divers co-legatees, share and share alike, by the Worshipful Master Richard Watts, I stepped backward into the road to survey my inheritance.

I found it to be a clean white house, of a staid and venerable air, with the quaint old door already three times mentioned, (an arched door, choice little long, low, lattice-windows, and a roof of three gables. The silent High Street of Rochester is full of gables, with old beams and timbers carved into strange faces. It is oddly garnished with a queer old clock, that projects over the pavement out of a grave red brick building, as if Time carried on business there, and hung out his sign. Sooth to say, he did an active stroke of work in Rochester, in the old days of the Romans, and the Saxons, and the Normans, and down to the times of King John, when the rugged castle—I will not undertake to say how many hundreds of years old then—was abandoned to the centuries of weather which have so defaced the dark apertures in its walls, that the ruin looks as if the rooks and daws had picked its eyes out.

I was very well pleased both with my property and its situation. While I was yet surveying it with growing content, I espied at one of the upper lattices which stood open, a decent body, of a wholesome matronly appearance, whose eyes I caught inquiringly addressed to mine. They said so plainly, "Do you wish to see the house?" that I answered aloud, "Yes, if you please." And within a minute the old door opened, and I bent my head, and went down two steps into the entry.

"This," said the matronly presence, ushering me into a low room on the right, "is where the travellers sit by the fire, and cook what bits of suppers they buy with their four-pences."

"Oh! Then they have no entertainment?" said I. For, the inscription over the outer door was still running in my head, and I was mentally repeating in a kind of tune, "Lodging, entertainment, and four-pence each."

"They have a fire provided for 'em," returned the matron; a mighty civil person, not, as I could make out, overpaid; "and



these cooking utensils. And this what's painted on a board, is the rules for their behavior. They have their four-pences when they get their tickets from the steward over the way—for I don't admit 'em myself, they must get their tickets first—and sometimes one buys a rasher of bacon, and another a herring, and another a pound of potatoes, or what not. Sometimes two or three of 'em will club their four-pences together, and make a supper that way. But not much of anything is to be got for four-pence, at present, when provisions is so dear."

"True, indeed," I remarked. I had been looking about the room, admiring its snug fireside at the upper end, its glimpse of the street through the low mullioned window, and its beams overhead. "It is very comfortable," said I.

"Ill-convenient," observed the matronly presence.

I liked to hear her say so; for it showed a commendable anxiety to execute, in no niggardly spirit, the intentions of Master Richard Watts. But the room was really so well adapted to its purpose, that I protested quite enthusiastically, against her disparagement.

"Nay, ma'am," said I, "I am sure it is warm in winter and cool in summer. It has a look of homely welcome and soothing rest. It has a remarkably cosy fireside, the very blink of which, gleaming out into the street upon a winter night, is enough to warm all Rochester's heart. And as to the convenience of the six Poor Travellers——"

"I don't mean them," returned the presence. "I speak of its being an ill-convenience to myself and my daughter having no other room to sit in of a night."

This was true enough, but there was another quaint room of corresponding dimensions on the opposite side of the entry: so, I stepped across to it, through the open doors of both rooms, and asked what this chamber was for?

"This," returned the presence, "is the Board Room; where the gentlemen meet when they come here."

Let me see. I had counted from the street six upper windows, besides these on the ground story. Making a perplexed calculation in my mind, I rejoined, "Then the six Poor Travellers sleep up stairs?"

My new friend shook her head. "They sleep," she answered, "in two little outer galleries at the back, where their beds has always been, ever since the Charity was founded. It being so very ill-convenient to me as things is at present, the gentlemen are going to take off a bit of the back yard, and make a slip of a room for 'em there, to sit in before they go to bed."

"And then the six Poor Travellers," said I, "will be entirely out of the house?"

"Entirely out of the house," assented the

presence, comfortably smoothing her hands; "which is considered much better for all parties, and much more convenient."

I had been a little startled, in the cathedral, by the emphasis with which the effigy of Master Richard Watts was bursting out of his tomb; but I began to think, now, that it might be expected to come across the High Street some stormy night, and make a disturbance here.

Howbeit, I kept my thoughts to myself, and accompanied the presence to the little galleries at the back. I found them on a tiny scale, like the galleries in old inn yards; and they were very clean. While I was looking at them, the matron gave me to understand that the prescribed number of Poor Travellers were forthcoming every night, from year's end to year's end; and that the beds were always occupied. My questions upon this, and her replies, brought us back to the Board Room, so essential to the dignity of "the gentlemen," where she showed me the printed accounts of the Charity, hanging up by the window. From them, I gathered that the greater part of the property bequeathed by the Worshipful Master Richard Watts, for the maintenance of this foundation, was, at the period of his death, mere marsh-land; but that, in course of time, it had been reclaimed and built upon, and was very considerably increased in value. I found, too, that about a thirtieth part of the annual revenue was now expended on the purposes commemorated in the inscription over the door; the rest being handsomely laid out in Chancery, law expenses, collectorship, receivership, poundage, and other appendages of management, highly complimentary to the importance of the six Poor Travellers. In short, I made the not entirely new discovery, that it may be said of an establishment like this, in dear Old England, as of the fat oyster in the American story, that it takes a good many men to swallow it whole.

"And pray, ma'am," said I, sensible that the blankness of my face began to brighten as a thought occurred to me, "could one see these Travellers?"

"Well!" she returned dubiously, "no!"

"Not to-night, for instance?" said I.

"Well!" she returned more positively, "no! Nobody ever asked to see them, and nobody ever did see them."

As I am not easily balked in a design when I am set upon it, I urged to the good lady that this was Christmas Eve; that Christmas comes but once a year—which is unhappily too true, for when it begins to stay with us the whole year round, we shall make this earth a very different place—that I was possessed by the desire to treat the Travellers to a supper and a temperate glass of hot Wassail; that the voice of Fame had been heard in the land, declaring my



ability to make hot Wassail; that if I were permitted to hold the feast, I should be found conformable to reason, sobriety, and good hours; in a word, that I could be merry and wise myself, and had been even known at a pinch to keep others so, although I was decorated with no badge or medal, and was not a Brother, Orator, Apostle, Saint, or Prophet of any denomination whatever. In the end I prevailed, to my great joy. It was settled that at nine o'clock that night, a turkey and a piece of roast beef should smoke upon the board; and that I, faint and unworthy minister for once of Master Richard Watts, should preside as the Christmas-supper host of the six Poor Travellers.

I went back to my inn, to give the necessary directions for the turkey and roast beef, and, during the remainder of the day, could settle to nothing for thinking of the Poor Travellers. When the wind blew hard against the windows—it was a cold day, with dark gusts of sleet alternating with periods of wild brightness, as if the year were dying fitfully—I pictured them advancing towards their resting-place, along various cold roads, and felt delighted to think how little they foresaw the supper that awaited them. I painted their portraits in my mind, and indulged in little heightening touches. I made them footsore; I made them weary; I made them carry packs and bundles; I made them stop by finger-posts and mile-stones, leaning on their bent sticks, and looking wistfully at what was written there; I made them lose their way, and filled their five wits with apprehensions of lying out all night, and being frozen to death. I took up my hat and went out, climbed to the top of the Old Castle, and looked over the windy hills that slope down to the Medway; almost believing that I could descry some of my Travellers in the distance. After it fell dark, and the Cathedral bell was heard in the invisible steeple—quite a bower of frosty rime when I had last seen it—striking five, six, seven, I became so full of my Travellers that I could eat no dinner, and felt constrained to watch them still, in the red coals of my fire. They were all arrived by this time, I thought, had got their tickets, and were gone in.—There, my pleasure was dashed by the reflection that probably some Travellers had come too late, and were shut out.

After the Cathedral bell had struck eight, I could smell a delicious savor of turkey and roast beef, rising to the window of my adjoining bed-room, which looked down into the inn yard, just where the lights of the kitchen reddened a massive fragment of the Castle wall. It was high time to make the Wassail now; therefore, I had up the materials, (which, together with their propor-

tions and combinations, I must decline to impart, as the only secret of my own I was ever known to keep,) and made a glorious jorum; not in a bowl—for a bowl anywhere but on a shelf, is a low superstition, fraught with cooling and slopping—but in a brown earthenware pitcher, tenderly suffocated when full, with a coarse cloth. It being now upon the stroke of nine, I set out for Watts's Charity, carrying my brown beauty in my arms. I would trust Ben the waiter with untold gold; but there are strings in the human heart which must never be sounded by another, and drinks that I make myself are those strings in mine.

The Travellers were all assembled, the cloth was laid, and Ben had brought a great billet of wood, and had laid it artfully on the top of the fire, so that a touch or two of the poker, after supper, should make a roaring blaze. Having deposited my brown beauty in a red nook of the hearth, inside the fender, where she soon began to sing like an ethereal cricket, diffusing at the same time, odors as of ripe vineyards, spice forests, and orange groves—I say, having stationed my beauty in a place of security and improvement, I introduced myself to my guests by shaking hands all round, and giving them a hearty welcome.

I found the party to be thus composed:—Firstly, myself. Secondly, a very decent man, indeed, with his right arm in a sling, who had a certain clean, agreeable smell of wood about him, from which I judged him to have something to do with shipbuilding. Thirdly, a little sailor-boy, a mere child, with a profusion of rich dark-brown hair, and deep, womanly-looking eyes. Fourthly, a shabby-genteel personage, in a threadbare black suit, and apparently in very bad circumstances, with a dry, suspicious look; the absent buttons on his waistcoat eked out with red tape, and a bundle of extraordinarily tattered papers sticking out of an inner breast-pocket. Fifthly, a foreigner by birth, but an Englishman in speech, who carried his pipe in the band of his hat, and lost no time in telling me, in an easy, simple, engaging way, that he was a watchmaker from Geneva, and travelled all about the Continent, mostly on foot, working as a journeyman, and seeing new countries—possibly (I thought) also smuggling a watch or so, now and then. Sixthly, a little widow, who had been very pretty, and was still very young, but whose beauty had been wrecked in some great misfortune, and whose manner was remarkably timid, scared, and solitary. Seventhly, and lastly, a Traveller, of a kind familiar to my boyhood, but now almost obsolete; a Book-peddler, who had a quantity of pamphlets and numbers with him, and who presently boasted that he could repeat more

verses in an evening than he could sell in a twelvemonth.

All these I have mentioned, in the order in which they sat at table. I presided, and the matronly presence faced me. We were not long in taking our places, for the supper had arrived with me, in the following procession:—

Myself with the pitcher.

Ben with Beer.

Inattentive Boy with hot plates.	Inattentive Boy with hot plates.
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#### THE TURKEY.

Female carrying sauces to be heated on the spot.

#### THE BEEF.

Man with Tray on his head, containing Vegetables and Sundries.

Volunteer Hostler from Hotel, grinning, and rendering no assistance.

As we passed along the High-street, Comet-like, we left a long tail of fragrance behind us, which caused the public to stop, sniffing in wonder. We had previously left at the corner of the inn-yard, a wall-eyed young man connected with the Fly department, and well accustomed to the sound of a railway whistle, which Ben always carries in his pocket: whose instructions were, so soon as he should hear the whistle blown, to dash into the kitchen, seize the hot plum-pudding and mince pies, and speed with them to Watts's Charity—where they would be received (he was further instructed) by the sauce-female, who would be provided with brandy in a blue state of combustion.

All these arrangements were executed in the most exact and punctual manner. I never saw a finer turkey, finer beef, or greater prodigality of sauce and gravy; and my Travellers did wonderful justice to everything set before them. It made my heart rejoice, to observe how their wind-and-frost hardened faces, softened in the clatter of plates and knives and forks, and mellowed in the fire and supper heat. While their hats and caps, and wrappers, hanging up; a few small bundles on the ground in a corner; and, in another corner, three or four old walking sticks, worn down at the end to mere fringe; linked this snug interior with the bleak outside in a golden chain.

When supper was done, and my brown beauty had been elevated on the table, there was a general requisition to me, to "take the corner:" which suggested to me, comfortably enough, how much my friends here made of a fire—for when had I ever thought so highly of the corner, since the days when I connected it with Jack Horner? However, as I declined, Ben, whose touch on all convivial instruments is perfect, drew the table apart, and instructing my Travellers to open right

and left, on either side of me, and form round the fire, closed up the centre with myself and my chair, and preserved the order we had kept at table. He had already, in a tranquil manner, boxed the ears of the inattentive boys, until they had been by imperceptible degrees boxed out of the room; and he now rapidly skirmished the sauce-female into the High-street, disappeared, and softly closed the door.

This was the time for bringing the poker to bear on the billet of wood. I tapped it three times, like an enchanted talisman, and a brilliant host of merrymakers burst out of it, and sported off by the chimney—rushing up the middle in a fiery country dance, and never coming down again. Meanwhile, by their sparkling light, which threw our lamp into the shade, I filled the glasses, and gave my Travellers, CHRISTMAS!—CHRISTMAS EVE, my friends, when the Shepherds, who were Poor Travellers, too, in their way, heard the Angels sing, "On earth, peace. Good-will, towards men!"

I don't know who was the first among us to think that we ought to take hands as we sat, in deference to the toast, or whether any one of us anticipated the others, but at any rate we all did it. We then drank to the memory of the good Master Richard Watts. And I wish his ghost may never have had any worse usage under that roof, than it had from us!

It was the witching time for story-telling. "Our whole life, Travellers," said I, "is a story more or less intelligible—generally less; but we shall read it by a clearer light when it is ended. I, for one, am so divided this night between fact and fiction, that I scarce know which is which. Shall we beguile the time by telling stories, in our order as we sit here?"

They all answered, yes, provided I would begin. I had little to tell them, but I was bound by my own proposal. Therefore, after looking for a while at the spiral column of smoke wreathing up from my brown beauty, through which I could have almost sworn I saw the effigy of Master Richard Watts less startled than usual; I fired away.

In the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, a relative of mine came limping down, on foot, to this town of Chatham. I call it this town, because if anybody present knows to a nicety where Rochester ends and Chatham begins, it is more than I do. He was a poor traveller, with not a farthing in his pocket. He sat by the fire in this very room, and he slept one night in a bed that will be occupied to-night by some one here.

My relative came down to Chatham, to enlist in a cavalry regiment, if a cavalry regiment would have him; if not, to take King George's shilling from any corporal or ser-



geant, who would put a bunch of ribbons in his hat. His object was to get shot; but he thought he might as well ride to death as be at the trouble of walking.

My relative's Christian name was Richard, but he was better known as Dick. He dropped his own surname on the road down, and took up that of Doubledick. He was passed as Richard Doubledick; age twenty-two; height, five foot ten; native place, Exmouth; which he had never been near in his life.—There was no cavalry in Chatham, when he limped over the bridge here, with half a shoe to his dusty foot, so he enlisted into a regiment of the line, and was glad to get drunk and forget all about it.

You are to know that this relative of mine had gone wrong and run wild. His heart was in the right place, but it was sealed up. He had been betrothed to a good and beautiful girl whom he had loved better than she—or perhaps even he—believed; but in an evil hour, he had given her cause to say to him, solemnly, "Richard, I will never marry any other man. I will live single for your sake, but Mary Marshall's lips;"—her name was Mary Marshall;—"never address another word to you on earth. Go, Richard! Heaven forgive you!" This finished him. This brought him down to Chatham. This made him private Richard Doubledick, with a deep determination to be shot.

There was not a more dissipated and reckless soldier in Chatham barracks, in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, than Private Richard Doubledick. He associated with the dregs of every regiment, he was as seldom sober as he could be, and was constantly under punishment. It became clear to the whole barracks, that Private Richard Doubledick would very soon be flogged.

Now the Captain of Richard Doubledick's company was a young gentleman not above five years his senior, whose eyes had an expression in them which affected Private Richard Doubledick in a very remarkable way. They were bright, handsome, dark eyes—what are called laughing eyes generally and, when serious, rather steady than severe—but, they were the only eyes now left in his narrowed world that Private Richard Doubledick could not stand. Unabashed by evil report and punishment, defiant of everything else and everybody else, he had but to know that those eyes looked at him for a moment, and he felt ashamed. He could not so much as salute Captain Taunton in the street, like any other officer. He was reproached and confused—troubled by the mere possibility of the captain's looking at him. In his worst moments he would rather turn back and go any distance out of his way, than encounter those two handsome, dark, bright eyes.

One day, when Private Richard Double-

dick came out of the Black hole, where he had been passing the last eight-and-forty hours, and in which retreat he spent a good deal of his time, he was ordered to betake himself to Captain Taunton's quarters. In the stale and squalid state of a man just out of the Black hole, he had less fancy than ever for being seen by the Captain; but he was not so mad yet as to disobey orders, and consequently went up to the terrace overlooking the parade-ground, where the officers' quarters were: twisting and breaking in his hands as he went along, a bit of the straw that had formed the decorative furniture of the Black hole.

"Come in!" cried the Captain, when he knocked with his knuckles at the door. Private Richard Doubledick pulled off his cap, took a stride forward, and felt very conscious that he stood in the light of the dark bright eyes.

There was a silent pause. Private Richard Doubledick had put the straw in his mouth, and was gradually doubling it up into his windpipe and choking himself.

"Doubledick," said the Captain, "Do you know where you are going to?"

"To the Devil, sir!" faltered Doubledick. "Yes," returned the Captain. "And very fast."

Private Richard Doubledick turned the straw of the Black hole in his mouth, and made a miserable salute of acquiescence.

"Doubledick," said the Captain, "since I entered his Majesty's service, a boy of seventeen, I have been pained to see many men of promise going that road; but I have never been so pained to see a man determined to make the shameful journey, as I have been, ever since you joined the regiment, to see you."

Private Richard Doubledick began to find a film stealing over the floor at which he looked; also to find the legs of the Captain's breakfast-table turning crooked, as if he saw them through water.

"I am only a common soldier, sir," said he. "It signifies very little what such a poor brute comes to."

"You are a man," returned the Captain with grave indignation, "of education and superior advantages; and if you say that, meaning what you say, you have sunk lower than I had believed. How low that must be, I leave you to consider: knowing what I know of your disgrace, and seeing what I see."

"I hope to get shot soon, sir," said Private Richard Doubledick; "and then the regiment, and the world together, will be rid of me."

The legs of the table were becoming very crooked. Doubledick, looking up to steady his vision, met the eyes that had so strong an influence over him. He put his hand before his own eyes, and the breast of his

disgrace-jacket swelled as if it would fly asunder.

"I would rather," said the young Captain, "see this in you, Doubledick, than I would see five thousand guineas counted out upon this table for a gift to my good mother. Have you a mother?"

"I am thankful to say she is dead, sir."

"If your praise," returned the Captain, "were sounded from mouth to mouth through the whole regiment, through the whole army, through the whole country, you would wish she had lived, to say with pride and joy, 'He is my son!'"

"Spare me, sir," said Doubledick. "She would never have heard any good of me. She would never have had any pride and joy in owning herself my mother. Love and compassion she might have had, and would have always had, I know; but not—Spare me, sir! I am a broken wretch, quite at your mercy!" And he turned his face to the wall, and stretched out his imploring hand.

"My friend—" began the captain.

"God bless you, sir!" sobbed Private Richard Doubledick.

"You are at the crisis of your fate. Hold your course unchanged, a little longer, and you know what must happen. I know even better than you can imagine, that after that has happened, you are lost. No man who could shed those tears, could bear those marks."

"I fully believe it, sir," in a low, shivering voice, said Private Richard Doubledick.

"But a man in any station can do his duty," said the young Captain, "and, in doing it, can earn his own respect, even if his case should be so very unfortunate and so very rare, that he can earn no other man's. A common soldier, poor brute though you called him just now, has this advantage in the stormy times we live in, that he always does his duty before a host of sympathising witnesses. Do you doubt that he may so do it as to be extolled through a whole regiment, through a whole army, through a whole country? Turn while you may yet retrieve the past, and try."

"I will! I ask for only one witness, sir," cried Richard, with a bursting heart.

"I understand you. I will be a watchful and a faithful one."

I have heard from Private Richard Doubledick's own lips, that he dropped down upon his knee, kissed that officer's hand, arose, and went out of the light of the dark bright eyes, an altered man.

In that year, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, the French were in Egypt, in Italy, in Germany, where not? Napoleon Buonaparte had likewise begun to stir against us in India, and most men could read the signs of the great troubles that were coming on. In the very next year, when we formed

an alliance with Austria against him, Captain Taunton's regiment was on service in India. And there was not a finer non-commissioned officer in it—no, nor in the whole line—than Corporal Richard Doubledick.

In eighteen hundred and one, the Indian army were on the coast of Egypt. Next year was the year of the proclamation of the short peace, and they were recalled. It had then become well known to thousands of men, that wherever Captain Taunton, with the dark bright eyes, led, there, close to him, ever at his side, firm as a rock, true as the sun, and brave as Mars, would be certain to be found, while life beat in their hearts, that famous soldier, Sergeant Richard Doubledick.

Eighteen hundred and five, besides being the great year of Trafalgar, was a year of hard fighting in India. That year saw such wonders done by a Sergeant-Major, who cut his way single-handed through a solid mass of men, recovered the colors of his regiment which had been seized from the hand of a poor boy shot through the heart, and rescued his wounded captain, who was down, and in a very jungle of horses' hoofs and sabres—saw such wonders done, I say, by this brave Sergeant-Major, that he was especially made the bearer of the colors he had worn; and Ensign Richard Doubledick had risen from the ranks.

Sorely cut up in every battle, but always reinforced by the bravest of men—for, the fame of following the old colours, shot through and through, which Ensign Richard Doubledick had saved, inspired all breasts—this regiment fought its way through the Peninsular war, up to the investment of Badajos in eighteen hundred and twelve. Again and again it had been cheered through the British ranks until the tears had sprung into men's eyes at the mere hearing of the mighty British voice so exultant in their valor; and there was not a drummer-boy but knew the legend, that wherever the two friends, Major Taunton with the dark bright eyes, and Ensign Richard Doubledick who was devoted to him, were seen to go, there the boldest spirits in the English army became wild to follow.

One day, at Badajos—not in the great storming, but in repelling a hot sally of the besieged upon our men at work in the trenches, who had given way, the two officers found themselves hurrying forward, face to face, against a party of French infantry who made a stand. There was an officer at their head, encouraging his men—a courageous, handsome, gallant officer of five and thirty—whom Doubledick saw hurriedly, almost momentarily, but saw well. He particularly noticed this officer waving his sword, and rallying his men with an eager and excited cry, when they fired in obedience to his gesture, and Major Taunton dropped.



It was over in ten minutes more, and Doubledick returned to the spot where he had laid the best friend man ever had, on a coat spread upon the wet clay. Major Taunton's uniform was opened at the breast, and on his shirt were three little spots of blood.

"Dear Doubledick," said he, "I am dying."

"For the love of Heaven, no!" exclaimed the other, kneeling down beside him, and passing his arm round his neck to raise his head. "Taunton! My preserver, my guardian angel, my witness! Dearest, truest, kindest of human beings! Taunton! For God's sake!"

The bright dark eyes—so very, very dark now, in the pale face—smiled upon him; and the hand he had kissed thirteen years ago, laid itself fondly on his breast.

"Write to my mother. You will see home again. Tell her how we became friends. It will comfort her as it comforts me."

He spoke no more, but faintly signed for a moment towards his hair as it fluttered in the wind. The Ensign understood him. He smiled again when he saw that, and gently turning his face over on the supporting arm as if for rest, died, with his hand upon the breast in which he had revived a soul.

No dry eye looked on Ensign Richard Doubledick, that melancholy day. He buried his friend on the field, and became a lone, bereaved man. Beyond his duty he appeared to have but two remaining cares in life; one, to preserve the little packet of hair he was to give to Taunton's mother; the other, to encounter that French officer who had rallied the men under whose fire Taunton fell. A new legend now began to circulate among our troops; and it was, that when he and the French officer came face to face once more, there would be weeping in France.

The war went on—and through it went the exact picture of the French officer on the one side, and the bodily reality upon the other—until the Battle of Toulouse was fought. In the returns sent home, appeared these words: "Severely wounded, but not dangerously, Lieutenant Richard Doubledick."

At Midsummer time in the year eighteen hundred and fourteen, Lieutenant Richard Doubledick, now a browned soldier, seven and thirty years of age, came home to England, inviolated. He brought the hair with him, near his heart. Many a French officer had he seen, since that day; many a dreadful night, in searching with men and lanterns for his wounded, had he relieved French officers lying disabled; but the mental picture and the reality had never come together.

Though he was weak and suffered pain, he lost not an hour in getting down to Frome in Somersetshire, where Taunton's mother lived. In the sweet compassionate words that naturally present themselves to the mind

to-night, "he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

It was a Sunday evening and the lady sat at her quiet garden-window, reading the Bible; reading to herself, in a trembling voice, that very passage in it as I have heard him tell. He heard the words, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!"

He had to pass the window; and the bright dark eyes of his debased time seemed to look at him. Her heart told her who he was; she came to the door, quickly, and fell upon his neck.

"He saved me from ruin, made me a human creature, won me from infamy and shame. O God, for ever bless him! As He will, He will!"

"He will!" the lady answered. "I know he is in Heaven!" Then she piteously cried, "But, O, my darling boy, my darling boy!"

Never, from the hour when Private Richard Doubledick enlisted at Chatham, had the Private, Corporal, Sergeant, Sergeant-Major, Ensign, or Lieutenant, breathed his right name, or the name of Mary Marshall, or a word of the story of his life, into any ear, except his reclainer's. That previous scene in his existence was closed. He had firmly resolved that his expiation should be, to live unknown; to disturb no more the peace that had long grown over his old offences; to let it be revealed when he was dead, that he had striven and suffered, and had never forgotten; and then, if they could forgive him and believe him—well, it would be time enough—time enough!

But, that night, remembering the words he had cherished for two years, "Tell her how we became friends. It will comfort her, as it comforts me," he related everything. It gradually seemed to him, as if in his maturity he had recovered a mother; it gradually seemed to her, as if in her bereavement she had found a son. During his stay in England, the quiet garden into which he had slowly and painfully crept, a stranger, became the boundary of his home; when he was able to rejoin his regiment in the spring, he left the garden, thinking was this indeed the first time he had ever turned his face towards the old colors, with a woman's blessing!

He followed them—so ragged, so scarred and pierced now, that they would scarcely hold together—to Quatre Bras, and Ligny. He stood beside them, in an awful stillness of many men, shadowy through the mist and drizzle of a wet June forenoon, on the field of Waterloo. And down to that hour, the picture in his mind of the French officer had never been compared with the reality.

The famous regiment was in action early in the battle, and received its first check in many an eventful year, when he was seen to fall. But it swept on to avenge him, and

left behind no such creature in the world of consciousness, as Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.

Through pits of mire, and pools of rain; along deep ditches, once roads, that were pounded and ploughed to pieces by artillery, heavy waggons, tramp of men and horses, and the struggle of every wheeled thing that could carry wounded soldiers; jolted among the dying and the dead, so disfigured by blood and mud as to be hardly recognisable for humanity; undisturbed by the moaning of men and the shrieking of horses, which, newly taken from the peaceful pursuits of life, could not endure the sight of the stragglers lying by the wayside, never to resume their toilsome journey; dead, as to any sentient life that was in it, and yet alive; the form that had been Lieutenant Richard Doubledick, with whose praises England rang, was conveyed to Brussels. There, it was tenderly laid down in hospital: and there it lay, week after week, through the long bright summer days, until the harvest, spared by war, had ripened and was gathered in.

Over and over again the sun rose and set upon the crowded city; over and over again, the moonlight nights were quiet on the plains of Waterloo; and all that time was a blank to what had been Lieutenant Richard Doubledick. Rejoicing troops marched into Brussels, and marched out; brothers and fathers, sisters, mothers, and wives, came thronging thither, drew their lots of joy or agony, and departed; so many times a day, the bells rang; so many times, the shadows of the great building changed; so many lights sprang up at dusk; so many feet passed here and there upon the pavements; so many hours of sleep and cooler air of night succeeded; indifferent to all, a marble face lay on a bed, like the face of a recumbent statue on the tomb of Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.

Slowly labouring, at last, through a long heavy dream of confused time and place, presenting faint glimpses of army surgeons whom he knew, and of faces that had been familiar to his youth—dearest and kindest among them, Mary Marshall's, with a solicitude upon it more like reality than anything he could discern—Lieutenant Richard Doubledick came back to life. To the beautiful life of a calm autumn evening sunset. To the peaceful life of a fresh quiet room with a large window standing open; a balcony, beyond, in which were moving leaves and sweet-smelling flowers; beyond again, the clear sky, with the sun full in his sight, pouring its golden radiance on his bed.

It was so tranquil and so lovely, that he thought he had passed into another world. And he said in a faint voice, "Taunton, are you near me?"

A face bent over him. Not his; his mother's.

"I came to nurse you. We have nursed you many weeks. You were moved here, long ago. Do you remember nothing?"

"Nothing."

The lady kissed his cheek, and held his hand, soothing him.

"Where is the regiment? What has happened? Let me call you mother. What has happened, mother?"

"A great victory, dear. The war is over, and the regiment was the bravest in the field."

His eyes kindled, his lips trembled, he sobbed, and the tears ran down his face. He was very weak: too weak to move his hand.

"Was it dark just now?" he asked presently.

"No."

"It was only dark to me? Something passed away, like a black shadow. But as it went, and the sun—O the blessed sun, how beautiful it is!—touched my face, I thought I saw a light white cloud pass out at the door. Was there nothing that went out?"

She shook her head, and, in a little while, he fell asleep: she still holding his hand, and soothing him.

From that time, he recovered. Slowly, for he had been desperately wounded in the head, and had been shot in the body; but, making some little advance every day. When he had gained sufficient strength to converse as he lay in bed, he soon began to remark that Mrs. Taunton always brought him back to his own history. Then, he recalled his preserver's dying words, and thought, "it comforts her."

One day, he awoke out of a sleep, refreshed, and asked her to read to him. But, the curtain of the bed, softening the light, which she always drew back when he awoke, that she might see him from her table at the bed-side where she sat at work, was held undrawn; and a woman's voice spoke, which was not hers.

"Can you bear to see a stranger?" it said softly. "Will you like to see a stranger?"

"Stranger!" he repeated. The voice awoke old memories, before the days of Private Richard Doubledick.

"A stranger now, but not a stranger once," it said in tones that thrilled him. "Richard, dear Richard, lost through so many years, my name——"

He cried out her name, "Mary!" and she held him in her arms, and his head lay on her bosom.

"I am not breaking a rash vow, Richard. These are not Mary Marshall's lips that speak. I have another name."

She was married.

"I have another name, Richard. Did you ever hear it?"

"Never!"

He looked into her face, so pensively beau-



tiful, and wondered at the smile upon it through her tears.

"Think again, Richard. Are you sure you never heard my altered name?"

"Never!"

"Don't move your head to look at me, dear Richard. Let it lie here, while I tell my story. I loved a generous, noble man; loved him with my whole heart; loved him for years and years; loved him faithfully, devotedly; loved him with no hope of return; loved him, knowing nothing of his highest qualities—not even knowing that he was alive. He was a brave soldier. He was honoured and beloved by thousands of thousands, when the mother of his dear friend found me, and showed me that in all his triumphs he had never forgotten me. He was wounded in a great battle. He was brought, dying, here, into Brussels, I came to watch and tend him, as I would have joyfully gone, with such a purpose, to the dreariest ends of the earth. When he knew no one else he knew me. When he suffered most, he bore his sufferings barely murmuring, content to rest his head where yours rests now. When he lay at the point of death, he married me, that he might call me wife before he died. And the name, my dear love, that I took on that forgotten night——"

"I know it now!" he sobbed. "The shadowy remembrance strengthens. It is come back. I thank heaven that my mind is quite restored! My Mary, kiss me; lull this weary head to rest, or I shall die of gratitude. His parting words are fulfilled. I see home again!"

Well! They were happy. It was a long recovery, but they were happy through it all. The snow had melted on the ground, and the birds were singing in the leafless thickets of the early spring, when these three were first able to ride out together, and when people flocked about the open carriage to cheer and congratulate Captain Richard Doubledick.

But, even then, it became necessary for the Captain, instead of returning to England, to complete his recovery in the climate of Southern France. They found a spot upon the Rhone, within a ride of the old town of Avignon, and within view of its broken bridge, which was all they could desire; they lived there, together, six months; then returned to England. Mrs. Taunton growing old after three years—though not so old as that her bright dark eyes were dimmed—and remembering that her strength had been benefitted by the change, resolved to go back for a year to those parts. So she went with a faithful servant, who had often carried her son in his arms; and she was to be rejoined and escorted home, at the year's end, by Captain Richard Doubledick.

She wrote regularly to her children (as she called them now), and they to her. She

went to the neighborhood of Aix; and there, in their own chateau near the farmer's house she rented, she grew into intimacy with a family belonging to that part of France. The intimacy began, in her often meeting among the vineyards a pretty child: a girl with a most compassionate heart, who was never tired of listening to the solitary English lady's stories of her poor son and the cruel wars. The family were as gentle as the child, and at length she came to know them so well, that she accepted their invitation to pass the last month of her residence abroad, under their roof. All this intelligence she wrote home, piecemeal as it came about, from time to time; and, at last, enclosed a polite note from the head of the chateau, soliciting, on the occasion of his approaching mission to that neighborhood, the honour of the company of *cet homme si justement célèbre Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick*.

Captain Doubledick; now a hardy, handsome man in the full vigor of life, broader across the chest and shoulders than he had ever been before; dispatched a courteous reply, and followed it in person. Travelling through all that extent of country after three years of peace, he blessed the better days on which the world had fallen. The corn was golden, not drenched in unnatural red; was bound in sheaves for food, not trodden underfoot by men in mortal fight. The smoke rose up from peaceful hearths, not blazing ruins. The carts were laden with the fair fruits of the earth, not with wounds and death. To him who had so often seen the terrible reverse, these things were beautiful indeed, and they brought him in a softened spirit to the old chateau near Aix, upon a deep blue evening.

It was a large chateau of the genuine old ghostly kind, with round towers, and extinguishers, and a high leaden roof, and more windows than Aladdin's Palace. The lattice blinds were all thrown open, after the heat of the day, and there were glimpses of rambling walls and corridors within. Then, there were immense outbuildings fallen into partial decay, masses of dark trees, terraced gardens, balustrades; tanks of water, too weak to play and too dirty to work; statues, weeds, and thickets of iron railing, that seemed to have overgrown themselves like the shrubberies, and to have branched out in all manner of wild shapes. The entrance doors stood open, as doors often do in that country when the heat of the day is past, and the Captain saw no bell or knocker, and walked in.

He walked into a lofty stone hall, refreshingly cool and gloomy after the glare of a southern day's travel. Extending along the four sides of this hall, was a gallery, leading to suites of rooms; and it was lighted from the top. Still no bell was to be seen.

"Faith," said the Captain, halting, ashamed of the clanking of his boots, "this is a ghostly beginning!"

He started back, and felt his face turn white. In the gallery, looking down at him, stood the French officer; the officer whose picture he had carried in his mind so long and so far. Compared with the original, at last—in every lineament how like it was!

He moved and disappeared, and Captain Richard Doubledick heard his steps coming quickly down into the hall. He entered through an archway. There was a bright, sudden look upon his face. Much such a look as it had worn in that fatal moment.

Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick? Enchanted to receive him! A thousand apologies! The servants were all out in the air. There was a little fete among them in the garden. In effect, it was the fete day of my daughter, the little cherished and protected of Madame Taunton.

He was so gracious and so frank, that Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick could not withhold his hand. "It is the hand of a brave Englishman," said the French officer, retaining it while he spoke. "I could respect a brave Englishman, even as my foe; how much more as my friend! I, also, am a soldier."

"He has not remembered me, as I have remembered him; he did not take such note of my face, that day, as I took of his," thought Captain Richard Doubledick. "How shall I tell him?"

The French officer conducted his guest into a garden, and presented him to his wife; an engaging and beautiful woman, sitting with Mrs. Taunton in a whimsical old-fashioned pavilion. His daughter, her fair young face beaming with joy, came running to embrace him; and there was a boy-baby to tumble down among the orange-trees on the broad steps, in making for his father's legs. A multitude of children-visitors were dancing to sprightly music; and all the servants and peasants about the chateau were dancing too. It was a scene of innocent happiness that might have been invented for the climax of the scenes of peace which had soothed the Captain's journey.

He looked on, greatly troubled in his mind, until a resounding bell rang, and the French officer begged to show him his rooms. They went up stairs into the gallery from which the officer had looked down; and Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick was cordially welcomed to a grand outer chamber, and a smaller one within, all clocks and draperies, and hearths, and brazen dogs, and tiles, and cool devices, and elegance, and vastness.

"You were at Waterloo," said the French officer.

"I was," said Captain Richard Doubledick. "And at Badajos."

Left alone with the sound of his own stern

voice in his ears, he sat down to consider. What shall I do, and how shall I tell him? At that time, unhappily, many deplorable duels had been fought between English and French officers, arising out of the recent war; and these duels, and how to avoid this officer's hospitality, were the uppermost thought in Captain Richard Doubledick's mind.

He was thinking and letting the time run out in which he should have dressed for dinner, when Mrs. Taunton spoke to him outside the door, asking if he could give her the letter he had brought from Mary. "His mother, above all," the Captain thought, "How shall I tell her?"

"You will form a friendship with your host, I hope," said Mrs. Taunton, whom he hurriedly admitted, "that will last for life. He is so true-hearted and so generous, Richard, that you can hardly fail to esteem one another. If he had been spared," she kissed (not without tears) the locket in which she wore his hair, "he would have appreciated him with his own magnanimity, and would have been truly happy that the evil days were past, which made such a man his enemy."

She left the room; and the Captain walked, first to one window, whence he could see the dancing in the garden, then to another window, whence he could see the smiling prospect and the peaceful vineyards.

"Spirit of my departed friend," said he, "is it through thee, these better thoughts are rising in my mind! Is it thou who hast shown me, all the way I have been drawn to meet this man, the blessings of the altered time! Is it thou who hast sent thy stricken mother to me, to stay my angry hand! Is it from thee the whisper comes, that this man did his duty as thou didst—and as I did, through thy guidance, which has wholly saved me, here on earth—and that he did no more!"

He sat down, with his head buried in his hands, and, when he rose up, made the second strong resolution of his life: That neither to the French officer, nor to the mother of his departed friend, nor to any soul while either of the two was living, would he breathe what only he knew. And when he touched that French officer's glass with his own, that day at dinner, he secretly forgave him in the name of the Divine Forgiver of injuries.

Here I ended my story as the first Poor Traveller. But, if I had told it now, I could have added that the time has since come when the son of Major Richard Doubledick, and the son of that French officer, friends as their fathers were before them, fought side by side in one cause: with their respective nations, like long-divided brothers whom the better times have brought together, fast united.



## THE SECOND POOR TRAVELLER.

I AM, by trade (said the man with his arm in a sling), a shipwright. I am recovering from an unlucky chop that one of my mates gave me with an adze. When I am all right again, I shall get taken on in Chatham Yard. I have nothing else in particular to tell of myself, so I'll tell a bit of a story of a seaport town.

Acon-Virlaz, the jeweller, sat in his shop on the Common Hard of Belleriport, smoking his evening pipe. Business was tolerably brisk in Belleriport just then. The great three-decker, the Blunderbore (Admiral Pumpkinseed's flag-ship), had just come in from the southern seas with the rest of the squadron, and had been paid off. The big screw line-of-battle ship Fantail, Captain Sir Heaver Cole, K.C.B., had got her blue-peter up for Kamschatka, and her crew had been paid advance wages. The Dundrum war-steamer was fresh coppering in the graving dock, and her men were enjoying a three weeks' run ashore. The Barracouta, the Calabash, the Skullsmasher, and the Nose-ring had returned from the African station with lots of prize-money from captured slavers. The Jollyport division of Royal Marines—who had plenty of money to spend, and spent it too; occupied the Marine barracks. The Ninety-eight Plungers, together with the depot companies of the Fourteenth Royal Screammers, had marched in to relieve the Seventy-third Wrestlers. There was some thought of embodying, for garrison duty, in Belleriport, the Seventh or West Swampshire Drabs regiment of Militia. Belleriport was full of sailors, soldiers and marines. Seven gold-laced cocked hats could be observed on the door steps of the George Hotel at one time. Almost every lady's bonnet in the High Street had a military or naval officer's head looking under it. You could scarcely get into Miss Pyeboard the pastry-cook's shop for midshipmen. There were so many soldiers in the streets, that you were inclined to take the whole of the population of Belleriport for lobsters, and to imagine that half of them were boiled and the other half waiting to be. The Common Hard was as soft as a featherbed with sailors. Lieutenant Hook at the Rendezvous was busy all day enrolling A B's, ordinaries, and stout lads. The Royal Grubbington victualling yard was turning out thousands of barrels of salt beef and pork and sea biscuit per diem. Huge guns were being hoisted on board ship; seaman-riggers, caulkers,

carpenters, and shipwrights, were all some hundreds of degrees busier than bees; and sundry gentlemen in the dockyard, habited in simple suits of drab, marked with the broad arrow—with striped stockings and glazed hats, and after whose personal safety sentinels with fixed bayonets and warders in oilskin coats affectionately looked—were busy too, in their way: dragging about chain-cables, blocks and spars; and heavy loads of timber, steadily but sulkily; and, in their close-shaven, beetle-browed countenances, evincing a silent but profound disgust.

Acon Virlaz had not done so badly during Belleriport's recent briskness. He was a jeweller; and sold watches, rings, chains, bracelets, snuff-boxes, brooches, shirt-studs, sleeve-buttons, pencil-cases, and true lovers' knots. But his trade in jewels did not interfere with his also vending hammocks, telescopes, sou'wester hats, lime-juice, maps, charts and log-books, Guernsey shirts, clasp knives, pea-coats, preserved meats, razors, swinging lamps, sea-chests, dancing-pumps, eye-glasses, water-proof overalls, patent blacking, and silk pocket-handkerchiefs emblazoned with the flags of all nations. Nor did his dealings in these articles prevent him from driving a very tidy little business in the purchase of gold dust, elephants' teeth, feathers and bandanas, from home-returned sailors; nor (so the censorious said) from the cashing of seamen's advance notes, and the discounting of the acceptances of the officers of her majesty's army and navy; nor (so the downright libellous asserted) from doing a little in the wine line, and a little in the picture line, and a good deal, when occasion required it, in the crimp line.

Acon-Virlaz sat in his shop on the Common Hard of Belleriport smoking his evening pipe. It was in the back shop that Acon-Virlaz sat. Above his head, hung the hammocks, the pilot-trowsers narrow at the knees and wide at the ancles, and the swinging lamps, and the water-proof overalls. The front shop loomed dimly through a grove of pea-coats, sou'wester hats, Guernsey shirts, and cans of preserved meats. One little gas jet in the back shop—for the front gas was not yet lighted—flickered on the heterogeneous articles hanging and heaped up together all around. The gas just tipped with light the brass knobs of the drawers which ran round all the four sides of the shop, tier above tier, and held Moses knows how many more trea-

asures of watchmaking, tailoring, and outfitting. The gas, just defined by feebly-shining threads, the salient lines and angles of a great iron safe in one corner; and finally the gas just gleamed—twinkled furtively, like a magpie looking into a marrow bone—upon the heap of jewelry collected upon the great slate-covered counter in Acon-Virlaz's back shop.

The counter was covered with slate; for, upon it Acon-Virlaz loved to chalk his calculations. It was ledger, day-book, and journal, all in one. The little curly headed Jew boy who was clerk, shopman, messenger, and assistant-measurer, in the tailoring department of the establishment, would as soon have thought of eating roast sucking-pig beneath Acon-Virlaz's nose, as of wiping, dusting, or, indeed, touching the sacred slate counter without special permission and authority from Acon-Virlaz himself.

By the way, it was not by that name that the jeweller and outfitter was known in Belleriport. He went by a simpler, homelier, shorter appellation: Moses, Levy, Sheeny—what you will; it does not much matter which; for most of the Hebrew nation have an inner name as well as an inner and richer life.

Acon-Virlaz was a little, plump, round, black-eyed, red-lipped, blue-bearded man. Age had begun to discount his head, and had given him sixty per cent. of gray hairs. A-top he was bald, and wore a little skull-cap. He had large fat hands, all creased and tumbled, as if his skin were too large for him; and, on one forefinger, he wore a great cornelian signet-ring, about which there were all sorts of legends. Miriam, his daughter, said—but what have I to do with Miriam, his daughter? She does not enter into this history at all.

The evening pipe that Acon-Virlaz was smoking was very mild and soothing. The blue haze went curling softly upwards, and seemed to describe pleasant figures of *L. s. d.* as it ascended. Through the grove, across the front shop, Acon-Virlaz could see little specks of gas from the lamps in the street; could hear Barney, his little clerk and shop-boy, softly whistling as he kept watch and ward upon the watches in the front window and the habiliments exposed for sale outside; could hear the sounds of a fiddle from the Admiral Nelson next door, where the men-of-war-men were dancing; could by a certain, pleasant, subtle smell from regions yet farther back, divine that Mrs. Virlaz (her father was a Bar-Galli, and worth hills of gold) was cooking something nice for supper.

From the pleasures of his pipe Acon-Virlaz turned to the pleasures of his jewelry. It lay there on the slate-covered counter, rich and rare. Big diamonds, rubies, opals, emeralds, sapphires, amethysts, topazes, turquoises, and pearls. By the jewels lay gold.

Gold in massy chains, in mourning rings, in massy bracelets, in chased snuff-boxes—in gold snuff too—that is in dingy, dull dust from the Guinea coast; in flakes and misshapen lumps from the mine; in toy-watches, in brave chronometers, in lockettes, vinaigrettes, brooches, and such woman's gear. The voice of the watches was dumb; the little flasks were scentless; but, how much beauty, life, strength, power, lay in these coloured baubles! Acon-Virlaz sighed.

Here, a little clock in the front shop, which nestled ordinarily in the midst of a wilderness of boots, and thought apparently a great deal more of itself than its size warranted, after a prodigious deal of running down, gasping, and clucking, struck nine. Acon-Virlaz laid down his pipe, and turning the gas a little higher, was about calling out to Mrs. Virlaz, that daughter of Bar-Galli (she was very stout, and fried fish in sky-blue satin), to know what she had got for supper, when a dark body became mistily apparent in the recesses of the grove of Guernsey shirts and sou'-westers, shutting out the view of the distant specks of gas in the street beyond. At the same time, a voice, that seemed to run upon a tramway, so smooth and sliding was it, said, three or four times over, "How is to-night with you, Mr. Virlaz—how is it with you this beautiful night? Aha!"

The voice and the body belonged to a gentleman of Mr. Virlaz's persuasion, who was stout and large, and very elastic in limb, and very voluble in delivery, in the which there was, I may remark, a tendency to reiteration, and an oily softness (inducing an idea that the tramway I mentioned had been sedulously greased), and a perceptible lisp. Mr. Virlaz's friend rubbed his hands (likewise smooth and well greased) continually. He was somewhat loosely jointed, which caused him to wag his head from side to side as he talked, after the fashion of an image; and his face would have been a great deal handsomer if his complexion had not been quite so white and pasty, and his eyes not quite so pink, and both together not quite so like a suet pudding with two raisins in it. Mr. Virlaz's friend's name was Mr. Ben-Daoud, and he came from Westhampton, where he discounted bills and sold clocks.

"Take a seat, Ben," said the jeweller, when he had recognized his friend and shaken hands with him; "Mrs. V. will be down directly. All well at home? Take a pipe?"

"I will just sit down a little minute, and thank you, Mr. Virlaz," Ben-Daoud answered volubly; "and all are well but little Zeeky, who has thrushes, and has swollen, the dear child, much since yesterday; but beg Mrs. Virlaz not to disturb herself for me—for I am not long here, and will not



take a pipe, having a cold, and being about to go a long journey to-morrow. Aha!"

All this Mr. Ben-Daoud said with the extreme volubility which I have noticed, and in the exact order in which his words are set down, but without any vocal punctuation. There was considerable doubt among the people as to Mr. Ben-Daoud's nationality. Some said that he came from Poland; others, that he hailed from Frankfort-on-the-Maine; some inclined to the belief that Amsterdam, in Holland, was his natal place; some, that Gibraltar had given him birth, or the still more distant land of Tangier. At all events, of whatsoever nation he was, or if not of any, he was for all Jewry, and knew the time of the day remarkably well. He had been in the rabbit-skin line of business before he took to selling clocks, to which he added, when regiments were in garrison, at Westhampton, the art of discounting.

"Going on a journey, eh, Ben?" asked Acon-Virlaz. "Business?"

"Oh, business of course, Mr. Virlaz," his friend replied. "Always business. I have some little moneys to look up, and some little purchases to make, and, indeed, humbly wish to turn a little penny; for I have very many heavy calls to meet next month—a little bill or two of mine you hold, by the way, among the rest, Mr. Virlaz."

"True," the jeweller said, rather nervously, and putting his hand on a great leathern portfolio in his breast pocket, in which he kept his acceptances; "and shall you be long gone, Mr. Daoud?"

This "Mr. Daoud," following upon the former familiar "Ben," was said without sternness, but spoke the creditor awakened to his rights. It seemed to say, "Smoke, drink, and be merry till your 'accepted payable at such a date' comes due; but pay then, or I'll sell you up like death."

Mr. Ben-Daoud seemed to have an inkling of this; for, he wagged his head, rubbed his hands, and answered, more volubly than ever, "Oh, as to that, Mr. Virlaz, dear sir, my journey is but of two days' lasting. I shall be back the day after to-morrow, and with something noticeable in the way of diamonds. Aha!"

"Diamonds!" exclaimed Acon-Virlaz, glancing towards the drawer where his jewels were; for you may be sure he had swept them all away into safety before his friend had completed his entrance. "Diamonds! Where are you going for diamonds, Ben?"

"Why, to the great fair that is held to-morrow, Mr. Virlaz, as well you know."

"Fair, Ben! Is there any fair to-morrow near Belleripport?"

"Why, bless my heart, Mr. Virlaz," Ben-Daoud responded, holding up his fat hands, "can it be that you, so respectable

and noticeable a man among our people, don't know that to-morrow is the great jewel fair that is held once in every hundred years, at which diamonds, rubies, and all other pretty stones are sold cheap—cheap as dirt, my dear—a hundred thousand guineas-worth for sixpence, one may say. Your grandfather must have been there, and well he made his market, you may be sure Aha! Good man!"

"I never heard of such a thing," gasped Acon-Virlaz, perfectly amazed and bewildered. "And what do you call this fair?"

"Why, Sky Fair, as well you should know, dear sir."

"Sky Fair?" repeated the jeweller.

"Sky Fair," answered Ben-Daoud.

"But whereabouts is it?"

"Come here," the voluble man said. He took hold of Acon-Virlaz by the wrist, and led him through the grove of pea-coats into the front shop; through the front shop into the open street: and then pointing upwards, he directed the gaze of the Jew to where, in the otherwise illuminated sky, there was shining one solitary star.

"Don't it look pretty?" he asked, sinking his voice into a confidential whisper. "Don't it look like a diamond, and glitter and twinkle as if some of our people the lapidaries in Amsterdam had cut it into faces? That's where Sky Fair is, Mr. Virlaz. Aha!"

"And you are going there to-morrow?" Acon-Virlaz asked, glancing uneasily at his companion.

"Of course I am," Ben-Daoud replied, "with my little bag of money to make my little purchases. And saving your presence, dear sir, I think you will be a great fool if you don't come with me, and make some little purchases too. For diamonds, Mr. Virlaz, are not so easily come by every day, as in Sky Fair; and a hundred years is a long time to wait before one can make another such bargain."

"I'll come, Ben," the jeweller cried, enthusiastically. "I'll come; and if ever I can do you any little obligation in the way of moneys, I will." And he grasped the hand of Ben-Daoud, who sold clocks, and discounted.

"Why, that's right," the other returned. "And I'll come for you at eight o'clock to-morrow, punctually; so get your little bag of money, and your nightcap and a comb ready."

"But," the jeweller asked, with one returning tinge of suspicion, "how are we to get there, Ben?"

"Oh," replied Mr. Ben-Daoud, coolly, "we'll have a shay."

Sky Fair!—diamonds!—cheap bargains! Acon-Virlaz could think of nothing else all the time of supper, which was something very nice, indeed, in the fish way, and

into the cooking of which oil entered largely. He was so pre-occupied, that Mrs. Virfaz and Miriam, his daughter, who had large eyes and a coral necklace (for week days), were fain to ask him the cause thereof; and he, like a good and tender husband and father as he was (and as most Hebrews, to their credit, are), told them of Ben-Daoud's marvellous story, and of his intended journey.

The next morning, as the clock struck eight, the sound of wheels was heard before Acon-Virfaz's door, in the Common Hard of Belleripport, and a handful of gravel was playfully thrown against the first-floor window by the hands of Ben-Daoud of Westhampton.

But it needed no gravel, no noise of wheels, no striking of clocks, to awaken Acon-Virfaz. He had been up and dressed since six o'clock; and, leaving Mrs. Virfaz peacefully and soundly sleeping, and hastily swallowing some hot coffee prepared by Barney the lad (to whom he issued strict injunctions concerning the conduct of the warehouse during the day), he descended into the street, and was affectionately hailed by his fellow-voyager to Sky Fair.

The seller of clocks sat in the "shay" of which he had spoken to Acon-Virfaz. It was a dusky little concern, very loose on its springs, and worn and rusty in its gear. As to the animal that drew it, Mr. Ben-Daoud mentioned by the way that it was a discount pony, having been taken as an equivalent for cash, in numberless bills negotiated in the Westhampton garrison, and had probably been worth, in his time, considerably more than his weight in gold.

Said pony, if he was a rum 'un to look at—which, indeed, he was, being hairy where he should have been smooth, and having occasional bald places, as though he were in the habit of scratching himself with his hoofs—which hoofs, coupled with his whity-brown ankles, gave him the appearance of having indifferent bluchers and dirty white socks on—was a good 'un to go. So remarkably good was he in going, that he soon left behind the High street of Belleripport, where the shop-boys were sleepily taking down the shutters; where housemaids were painfully elaborating the doorsteps with hearth-stones, to be soiled by the first visitors' dirty boots (such is the way of the world); where the milkman was making his early morning calls, and the night policemen were going home from duty; and the third lieutenant of the Blunderbore—who had been ashore on leave, and was a little shaken about the eyes still—was hastening to catch the "beef-boat" to convey him to his ship. Next, the town itself did the pony leave behind; the outskirts, the outlying villages, the ruined stocks and deserted pound, the Port-Admiral's villa;

all these he passed, running as fast as a constable, or a bill, until he got at last into a broad white road, which Acon-Virfaz never remembered to have seen before; a road with a high hedge on either side, and to which there seemed to be no end.

Mr. Ben-Daoud drove the pony in first-rate style. His head and the animal's wagged in concert; and the more he flourished his whip, the more the pony went; and both seemed to like it. The great white road sent up no dust. Its stones, if stones it had, never grated nor gave out a sound beneath the wheels of the "shay." It was only very white and broad, and seemed to have no end.

Not always white, however; for, as they progressed, it turned in color first milky-gray, then what schoolboys call, in connection with the fluid served out to them at breakfast-time, sky-blue; then a deep, vivid, celestial blue. And the high hedge on either side melted by degrees into the same hue; and Acon-Virfaz began to feel curiously feathery about the body, and breezy about the lungs. He caught hold of the edge of the "shay," as though he were afraid of falling over. He shut his eyes from time to time, as though he were dizzy. He began to fancy that he was in the sky.

"There is Sky Fair, Mr. Virfaz!" Ben-Daoud suddenly said, pointing ahead with his whip.

At that moment, doubtless through the superior attractions of Sky Fair, the dusky "shay" became of so little account to Acon-Virfaz as to disappear entirely from his sight and mind, though he had left his nightcap and comb (his little bag of money was safe in his side-pocket, trust him) on the cushion. At the same moment, it must have occurred to the discount pony to put himself out at living in some very remote corner of creation, for he vanished altogether too; and Acon-Virfaz almost fancied that he saw the beast's collar fall fifty thousand fathoms five, true as a plumb-line, into space; and the reins, which but a moment before Ben-Daoud had held, flutter loosely away, like feathers.

He found himself treading upon a hard, loose, gritty surface, which, on looking down, appeared like diamond-dust.

"Which it is," Mr. Ben-Daoud explained, when Acon-Virfaz timidly asked him. "Cheap as dirt here! Capital place to bring your cast-iron razors to be sharpened, Mr. Virfaz."

The jeweller felt inclined for the moment, to resent this pleasantry as somewhat personal; for, to say truth, the razors in which he dealt were not of the primest steel.

There was a great light. The brightest sun-light that Acon-Virfaz had ever seen, was but a poor farthing-candle compared to



this resplendency. There was a great gate through which they had to pass to the fair. The gate seemed to Acon-Virlaz as if all the jewelry and wrought gold in the world had been half-fused, half-welded together, into one monstrous arabesque or trellis-work. There was a little porter's lodge by the gate, and a cunning-looking little man by it, with a large bunch of keys at his girdle. The thing seemed impossible and ridiculous; yet Acon-Virlaz could not help fancying that he had seen the cunning little porter before, and, of all places in the world, in London, at the lock-up house in Cursitor street, Chancery Lane, kept by Mr. Mephibosheth, to whose red-headed little turnkey, Benjy, he bore an extraordinary resemblance.

Who is to tell of the glories of Sky Fair? Who, indeed, unless he had a harp of gold, strung with diamonds? Who is to tell of the long lines of dazzlingly white booths, hundreds, if not thousands, if not millions, of miles in extent, where jewels of surpassing size and purest water were sold by the peck, like peas; by the pound, like spice-nuts; by the gallon, like table-beer? Who is to tell of the swings, the roundabouts, the throwing of sticks, each stick surmounted by a diamond as big as an ostrich-egg; the live armadillos, with their jewelled scales; the scratchers, corruscating like meteors; the gingerbread kings and queens; the whole fun of the fair one dazzling, blinding, radiating mass of gold and gems!

It was not Acon-Virlaz who could tell much about these wondrous things in after days; for he was too occupied with his little bag of money and his little fairings. Ben-Daoud had spoken the truth; diamonds were as cheap as dirt in Sky Fair. In an inconceivably short space of time, and by the expenditure of a few half-pence, the jeweller had laid in a stock of precious stones. But he was not satisfied with pockets-full, bags-full, hats-full of unset, uncut gems. There were heaps of jewelled trinkets, chains, bracelets, rings, piled up for sale. He hankered after these. He bought heaps of golden rings. He decorated his wrists and ankles with bracelets and bangles enough for a Bayadere. He might have been a dog, for the collars round his neck. He might have been an Ambrose Gwynneth hung in chains, for the profusion of those ornaments in gold with which he loaded himself. And then he went in for solid services of plate, and might have been a butler or a philanthropist, for the piles of ewers, salvers, candelabra, and goblets, which he accumulated in his hands, under his arms, on his head. More gold! more jewels! More! more—

Till a bell began to ring,—a loud, clanging, voiceful golden bell, carried by a shining bellman, and the clapper of which

was one huge diamond. The thousands of people who, a moment before, had been purchasing jewels and gold, no sooner heard the bell than they began to scamper like mad towards the gate; and, at the same time, Acon-Virlaz heard the bellman making proclamation that Sky Fair would close in ten minutes time, and that every man, woman, or child found within the precincts of the fair, were it only for the thousandth part of the tithe of a moment after the clock had struck Twelve, would be turned into stone for a hundred years.

Till the men, women, and children from every nation under the sun (he had not observed them until now, so intent had he been on his purchases), came tearing past him; treading on his toes, bruising his ribs, jostling him, pushing him from side to side, screaming to him with curses to move on quicker, or to get out of the way. But, he could not move on quicker. His gold stuck to him. His jewels weighed him down. Invisible clogs seemed to attach themselves to his feet. He kept dropping his precious wares, and, for the life of him, could not refrain from stopping to pick them up; in doing which he dropped more.

Till Mr. Ben-Daoud passed him with a girdle of big diamonds, tied round his waist in a blue bird's-eye handkerchief, like a professional pedestrian.

Till the great bell from ringing intermittent peals kept up one continuous clang. Till a clock above, like a catherine wheel, which Acon-Virlaz had not before noticed, began to let off rockets of minutes, Roman candles of seconds. Till the bellman's proclamation merged into one sustained roar of Oh yes! Oh yes! Till the red-headed gatekeeper, who was like Mr. Mephibosheth's turnkey, gave himself up to an unceasing scream of "All out! All out!" whirling his keys above his head, so that they scattered sparks and flakes of fire all around.

Till fifty thousand other bells began to clang, and fifty million other voices to scream. Till all at once there was silence, and the clock began to strike slowly sadly, One, two, three, four—to Twelve.

Acon-Virlaz was within a few feet of the gate when the fatal clock began to strike. By a desperate effort he cast aside the load of plate which impeded his movements. He tore off his diamond-laden coat; he cast his waistcoat to the winds, and plunged madly into the throng that blocked up the entrance.

To find himself too late. The great gates closed with a heavy shock, and Acon-Virlaz reeled away from them in the rebound, bruised, bleeding, and despairing. He was too late. Sky Fair was closed, and he was to be turned into stone for a hundred years.

The red-headed doorkeeper (who by the

way squinted abominably) was leaning with his back to the gate, drumming with his keys on the bars.

"It's a beautiful day to be indoors," he said, consolingly. "It's bitter cold outside."

Acon-Virlaz shuddered. He felt his heart turning into stone within him. He fell on his knees before the red-headed doorkeeper; and with tears, sobs, groans, entreated him to open the gate. He offered him riches, he offered him the hand of Miriam his large-eyed daughter: all for one turn of the key in the lock of the gate of Sky Fair.

"Can't be done," the doorkeeper remarked, shaking his head. "Till Sky Fair opens again, you can't be let out."

Again and again did the jeweller entreat, until he at last appeared to make an impression on the red-headed janitor.

"Well, I'll tell you what I can do for you, old gentleman," he said: "I daren't open the gate for my life; but there's a window in my lodge; and if you choose to take your chance of jumping out of it (it isn't far to fall) you can."

Acon-Virlaz, uttering a confused medley of thanks, was about to rush into the lodge, when the gatekeeper laid his hand upon his arm.

"By the way, mister," he said, "you may as well give me that big signet ring on your finger, as a token to remind you of all the fine things you promised me when I come your way."

The jeweller hastily plucked off the desired trinket, and gave it to his red-headed

deliverer. Then, he darted into the narrow, dark porter's lodge, overturned a round table, on which was the doorkeeper's dinner (it smelt very much like liver and bacon), and clambered up to a very tall, narrow window. He leaned his hands on the sill, and thrusting his head out to see how far he had to jump, descried, immediately beneath him, the tasty shay, the discount pony, and Mr. Ben-Daoud with a lighted cigar in his mouth and the reins in his hand, just ready to start. "Hold hard!" screamed Acon-Virlaz. Hold hard! Ben, my dear friend, my old friend: hold hard, and take me in!"

Mr. Ben-Daoud's reply was concise but conclusive:

"Go to Bermondsey," he said, and whipped his pony.

The miserable man groaned aloud in despair; for the voice of the doorkeeper urged him to be quick about it, if he was going to jump; and he felt, not only his heart, but his limbs, becoming cold and stony. Shutting his eyes and clenching his teeth, he jumped and fell, down, down into space. According to his own calculations, he must have fallen at least sixty thousand miles and for six months in succession; but, according to Mrs. Acon-Virlaz and Miriam his large-eyed daughter, he only fell from his arm-chair into the fire-place, striking his head against the tongs as he fell; having come home a little while before, with no such thing about him as his beautiful seal-ring; and being slightly the worse for liquor, not to say drunk.

## THE THIRD POOR TRAVELLER.

You wait my story, next? Ah, well!  
Such marvels as you two have told  
You must not think that I can tell;  
For I am only twelve years old.  
Ere long I hope I shall have been  
On my first voyage, and wonders seen.  
Some princess I may help to free  
From pirates on a far-off sea;  
Or, on some desert isle be left,  
Of friends and shipmates all bereft

For the first time I venture forth,  
From our blue mountains of the north.  
My kinsman kept the lodge that stood  
Guarding the entrance near the wood,  
By the stone gateway gray and old,  
With quaint devices carved about,  
And broken shields; while dragons bold  
Glared on the common wall without;  
And the long trembling ivy spray

Half hid the centuries' decay.  
In solitude and silence grand  
The castle towered above the land  
The castle of the Earl, whose name  
(Wrapped in old bloody legends) came  
Down through the times when Truth and Right  
Bent down to armed Pride and Might.  
He owned the country far and near;  
And, for some weeks in every year,  
(When the brown leaves were falling fast  
And the long, lingering autumn passed),  
He would come down to hunt the deer,  
With hound and horse in splendid pride.  
The story lasts the live-long year,  
The peasant's winter evening fill  
When he is gone and they abide  
In the lone quiet of their hills.

I longed, too, for the happy night,  
When all with torches flaring bright

The crowding villagers would stand,  
 A patient, eager, waiting band,  
 Until the signal ran like flame  
 "They come!" and, slackening speed, they came.  
 Outriders first, in pomp and state,  
 Pranced on their horses thro' the gate;  
 Then the four steeds as black as night,  
 All decked with trappings blue and white,  
 Drew thro' the crowd that opened wide,  
 The Earl and Countess side by side.  
 The stern grave Earl, with formal smile  
 And glistening eyes and stately pride,  
 Could ne'er my childish gaze beguile  
 From the fair presence by his side,  
 The lady's soft sad glance, her eyes  
 (Like stars that shone in summer skies),  
 Her pure white face so calmly bent,  
 With gentle greetings round her sent;  
 Her look, that always seemed to gaze  
 Where the blue past had closed again  
 Over some happy shipwrecked days,  
 With all their freight of love and pain.  
 She did not even seem to see  
 The little lord upon her knee,  
 And yet he was like angel fair,  
 With rosy cheeks and golden hair,  
 That fell on shoulders white as snow.  
 But the blue eyes that shone below  
 His clustering rings of auburn curls,  
 Were not his mother's, but the Earl's.

I feared the Earl, so cold and grim,  
 I never dared be seen by him.  
 When thro' our gate he used to ride,  
 My kinsman Walter bade me hide;  
 He said he was so stern.  
 So, when the hunt came past our way  
 I always hasten'd to obey,  
 Until I heard the bugles play  
 The notes of their return.  
 But she—my very heart-strings stir  
 Whene'er I speak or think of her—  
 The whole wide world could never see  
 A noble lady such as she,  
 So full of angel charity.

Strange things of her our neighbors told  
 In the long winter evenings cold,  
 Around the fire. They would draw near  
 And speak half-whispering, as in fear;  
 As if they thought the Earl could hear  
 Their treason 'gainst his name.  
 They thought the story that his pride  
 Had stooped to wed a low-born bride,  
 A stain upon his fame.  
 Some said 'twas false; there could not be  
 Such blot on his nobility:  
 But others vowed that they had heard  
 The actual story word for word,  
 From one who well my lady knew,  
 And had declared the story true.

In a far village, little known,  
 She dwelt—so ran the tale—alone.  
 A widowed bride, yet, oh! so bright,  
 Shone through the mist of grief, her charms;  
 They said it was the loveliest sight,—  
 She with her baby in her arms.

The Earl, one summer morning, rode  
 By the sea-shore where she abode;  
 Again he came,—the vision sweet  
 Drew him reluctant to her feet.  
 Fierce must the struggle in his heart  
 Have been, between his love and pride,  
 Until he chose that wondrous part  
 To ask her to become his bride.  
 Yet, ere his noble name she bore,  
 He made her vow that nevermore  
 She would behold her child again  
 But hide his name and hers from men.  
 The trembling promise duly spoken,  
 All links of the low past were broken,  
 And she arose to take her stand  
 Amid the nobles of the land.

Then all would wonder,—could it be  
 That one so lowly born as she,  
 Raised to such height of bliss, should seem  
 Still living in some weary dream?  
 'Tis true she bore with calmest grace  
 The honours of her lofty place,  
 Yet never smiled, in peace or joy,  
 Not even to greet her princely boy.  
 She heard, with face of white despair,  
 The cannon thunder through the air,  
 That she had given the Earl an heir.  
 Nay, even more (they whispered low,  
 As if they scarce durst fancy so),  
 That, through her lofty wedded life,  
 No word, no tone, betrayed the wife.  
 Her look seemed ever in the past:  
 Never to him it grew more sweet;  
 The self-same weary glance she cast  
 Upon the greyhound at her feet,  
 As upon him, who bade her claim  
 The crowning honor of his name.

This gossip, if old Walter heard,  
 He checked it with a scornful word:  
 I never durst such tales repeat;  
 He was too serious and discreet  
 To speak of what his lord might do.  
 Besides, he loved my lady too:  
 And many a time, I recollect,  
 They were together in the wood;  
 He, with an air of grave respect;  
 And earnest look, uncovered stood.  
 And though their speech I never heard,  
 (Save now and then a louder word,)  
 I saw he spake as none but one  
 She loved and trusted durst have done;  
 For oft I watched them in the shade  
 That the close forest branches made,  
 Till slanting golden sunbeams came  
 And smote the fir-trees into flame,  
 A radiant glory round her lit.  
 Then down her white robe seemed to flit,  
 Gilding the brown leaves on the ground,  
 And all the feathery ferns around.  
 While by some gloomy pine she leant  
 And he in earnest talk would stand,  
 I saw the tear-drops, as she bent,  
 Fall on the flowers in her hand,  
 Strange as it seemed and seems to be  
 That one so sad, so cold as she,  
 Could love a little child like me;



Yet so it was, I never heard  
Such tender words as she would say,  
Or murmurs, sweeter than a word,  
Would breathe upon me as I lay.  
While I, in smiling joy, would rest,  
For hours, my head upon her breast.  
Our neighbors said that none could see  
In me the common childish charms,  
(So grave and still I used to be,)  
And yet she held me in her arms,  
In a fond clasp, so close, so tight,—  
I often dream of it at night.

She bade me tell her all—no other,  
My childish thoughts e'er cared to know ;  
For I—I never knew my mother ;  
I was an orphan long ago.  
And I could all my fancies pour,  
That gentle loving face before.  
She liked to hear me tell her all ;  
How that day I had climbed the tree,  
To make the largest fir-cones fall ;  
And how one day I hoped to be  
A sailor on the deep blue sea—  
She loved to hear it all !

Then wondrous things she used to tell,  
Of the strange dreams that she had known.  
I used to love to hear them well ;  
If only for her sweet low tone,  
Sometimes so sad, although I knew  
That such things never could be true.  
One day she told me such a tale  
It made me grow all cold and pale,  
The fearful thing she told !  
Of a poor woman mad and wild  
Who coined the life-blood of her child,  
Who tempted by a fiend, had sold  
The heart out of her breast for gold.  
But, when she saw me frightened seem,  
She smiled, and said it was a dream.  
How kind, how fair she was ; how good  
I cannot tell you. If I could  
You, too, would love her. The mere thought  
Of her great love for me has brought  
Tears in my eyes ; though far away,  
It seems as it were yesterday.  
And just as when I look on high  
Through the blue silence of the sky,  
Fresh stars shine out, and more and more,  
Where I could see so few before.  
So, the more steadily I gaze  
Upon those far-off misty days,  
Fresh words, fresh tones, fresh memories start  
Before my eyes and in my heart.  
I can remember how one day  
(Talking in silly childish way)  
I said how happy I should be  
If I were like her son—as fair,  
With just such bright blue eyes as he,  
And such long locks of golden hair.  
A dark smile on her pale face broke,  
And in strange solemn words she spoke :  
“ My own, my darling one—no, no !  
I love you, far, far better so.  
I would not change the look you bear,  
Or one wave of your dark brown hair,  
The mere glance of your sunny eyes,

Deep in my deepest soul I prize  
Above that baby fair !  
Not one of all the Earl's proud line  
In beauty ever matched with thine.  
And 'tis by thy dark locks thou art  
Bound even faster round my heart,  
And made more wholly mine !”  
And then she paused, and weeping said  
“ You are like one who now is dead—  
Who sleeps in a far distant grave.  
O may God grant that you may be  
As noble and as good as he,  
As gentle and as brave !”  
Then in my childish way I cried,  
“ The one you tell me of who died,  
Was he as noble as the Earl ?”  
I see her red lips scornful curl,  
I feel her hold my hand again  
So tightly that I shrank in pain—  
I seem to hear her say,  
“ He whom I tell you of, who died.  
He was so noble and so gay,  
So generous and so brave,  
That the proud Earl by his dear side  
Would look a craven slave.”  
She paused ; then, with a quivering sigh,  
She laid her hand upon my brow :  
“ Live like him, darling, and so die.  
Remember that he tells you now,  
True peace, real honor, and content,  
In cheerful pious toil abide ;  
For gold and splendor are but sent  
To curse our vanity and pride.”

One day some childish fever pain  
Burnt in my veins and fired my brain.  
Moaning, I turned from side to side ;  
And, sobbing in my bed, I cried,  
Till night in calm and darkness crept  
Around me, and at last I slept.  
When suddenly I woke to see  
The lady bending over me.  
The drops of cold November rain  
Were falling from her long, damp hair ;  
Her anxious eyes were dim with pain ;  
Yet she looked wondrous fair.  
Arrayed for some great feast she came,  
With stones that shone and burnt like flame.  
Wound round her neck, like some bright snake,  
And set like stars within her hair,  
They sparkled so, they seemed to make  
A glory everywhere.  
I felt her tears upon my face,  
Her kisses on my eyes ;  
And a strange thought I could not trace  
I felt within my heart arise ;  
And, half in feverish pain, I said ;  
“ O if my mother were not dead !”  
And Walter bade me sleep ; but she  
Said, “ Is it not the same to thee  
That I watch by thy bed ?”  
I answered her, “ I love you, too ;  
But it can never be the same ;  
She was no Countess like to you,  
Nor wore such sparkling stones of flame.”  
O the wild look of fear and dread !  
The cry she gave of bitter woe !  
I often wonder what I said



To make her moan and shudder so.  
Through the long night she tended me  
With such sweet care and charity.  
But I should weary you to tell  
All that I know and love so well ;  
Yet one night more stands out alone  
With a sad sweetness all its own.

The wind blew loud that dreary night.  
Its wailing voice I well remember ;  
The stars shone out so large and bright  
Upon the frosty fir-boughs white :  
That dreary night of cold December  
I saw old Walter silent stand,  
Watching the soft last flakes of snow  
With looks I could not understand  
Of strange perplexity and woe.  
At last he turned and took my hand  
And said the Countess just had sent  
To bid us come ; for she would fain  
See me once more, before she went  
Away,—never to come again.  
We came in silence thro' the wood  
(Our footfall was the only sound),  
To where the great white castle stood.  
With darkness shadowing it around.  
Breathless, we trod with cautious care  
Up the great echoing marble stair ;  
Trembling, by Walter's hand I held,  
Scared by the splendors I beheld ;  
Now thinking, Should the Earl appear !  
Now looking up with giddy fear  
To the dim vaulted roof, that spread  
Its gloomy arches overhead.  
Long corridors we softly past,  
(My heart was beating loud and fast)  
And reached the Lady's room at last.  
A strange faint odor seemed to weigh  
Upon the dim and darkened air.  
One shaded lamp, with softened ray,  
Scarce showed the gloomy splendor there.  
The dull red brands were burning low :  
And yet a fitful gleam of light,  
Would now and then, with sudden glow,  
Start forth, then sink again in night.  
I gazed around, yet half in fear,  
Till Walter told me to draw near.  
And in the strange and flickering light,  
Towards the Lady's bed I crept.  
All folded round with snowy white,  
She lay (one would have said she slept),  
So still the look of that white face,  
It seemed as it were carved in stone.  
I paused before I dared to place,  
Within her cold white hand my own.  
But, with a smile of sweet surprise,  
She turned to me her dreamy eyes ;  
And slowly, as if life were pain,  
She drew me in her arms to lie :  
She strove to speak, and strove in vain ;

Each breath was like a long-drawn sigh.  
The throbs that seemed to shake her breast,  
The trembling clasp, so loose, and weak,  
At last grew calmer, and at rest ;  
And then she strove once more to speak :  
“ My God, I thank thee, that my pain  
Of day by day and year by year,  
Has not been suffered all in vain,  
And I may die while he is near.  
I will not fear but that Thy grace  
Has swept away my sin and woe,  
And sent this little angel face,  
In my last hour to tell me so.”  
(And here her voice grew faint and low)  
“ My child where'er thy life may go,  
To know that thou art brave and true,  
Will pierce the highest heavens through.  
And even there my soul shall be  
More joyful for this thought of thee.”  
She folded her white hands, and stayed  
All cold and silently she lay :  
I knelt beside the bed, and prayed  
The prayer she used to make me say.  
I said it many times, and then  
She did not move, but seemed to be  
In a deep sleep, nor stirred again.  
No sound stirred in the silent room,  
Or broke the dim and solemn gloom,  
Save when the brands that burnt so low  
With noisy fitful gleam of light,  
Would spread around a sudden glow,  
Then sink in silence and in night.  
How long I stood I do not know :  
At last poor Walter came, and said  
(So sadly) that we now must go,  
And whispered she we loved was dead,  
He bade me kiss her face once more,  
Then led me sobbing to the door.  
I scarcely knew what dying meant,  
Yet a strange grief, before unknown,  
Weighed on my spirit as we went  
And left her lying all alone.

We went to the far North once more,  
To seek the well remembered home.  
Where my poor kinsman dwelt before,  
Whence now he was too old to roam :  
And there six happy years we past,  
Happy and peaceful till the last :  
When poor old Walter died, and he  
Blessed me and said I now might be  
A sailor on the deep blue sea.  
And so I go ; and yet in spite  
Of all the joys I long to know ;  
Though I look onward with delight,  
With something of regret I go,  
And young or old, on land or sea,  
One guiding memory I shall take  
Of what she prayed that I might be,  
And what I will be for her sake !

## THE FOURTH POOR TRAVELLER.

Now, first of all, I should like to know what you mean by a story? You mean what other people do? And pray what is that? You know, but you can't exactly tell. I thought so! In the course of a pretty long legal experience, I have never yet met with a party out of my late profession, who was capable of giving a correct definition of anything.

To judge by your looks, I suspect you are amused at my talking of any such thing ever having belonged to me as a profession. Ha! ha! Here I am, with my toes out of my boots, without a shirt to my back or a rap in my pocket, except the fourpence I get out of this charity (against the present administration of which I protest—but that's not the point), and yet not two years ago I was an attorney in large practice in a bustling big country town. I had a house in the High Street. Such a giant of a house that you had to get up six steps to knock at the front door. I had a footman to drive tramps like me off all or any one of my six hearth-stoned steps, if they dared sit down on all or any one of my six hearth-stoned steps; a footman who would give me into custody now if I tried to shake hands with him in the streets. I decline to answer your questions if you ask me any. How I got into trouble, and dropped down to where I am now, is my secret.

Now, I absolutely decline to tell you a story. But, though I won't tell a story, I am ready to make a statement. A statement is a matter of fact; therefore the exact opposite of a story, which is a matter of fiction. What I am now going to tell you really happened to me.

I served my time—never mind in whose office; and I started in business for myself, in one of our English country towns—I decline stating which. I hadn't a quarter of the capital I ought to have had to begin with; and my friends in the neighborhood were poor and useless enough, with one exception. That exception was Mr. Frank Gatcliffe, son of Mr. Gatcliffe, member for the county, the richest man and the proudest for many a mile round about our parts. Stop a bit! you man in the corner there; you needn't pert up and look knowing. You won't trace any particulars by the name of Gatcliffe. I'm not bound to commit myself or anybody else by mentioning names. I have given you the first that came into my head.

Well! Mr. Frank was a staunch friend of mine, and ready to recommend me whenever he got the chance. I had given him a little timely help—for a consideration, of course—in borrowing money at a fair rate of interest; in fact, I had saved him from the Jews. The money was borrowed while Mr. Frank was at college. He came back from college, and stopped at home a little while; and then there got spread about all our neighborhood, a report that he had fallen in love, as the saying is, with his young sister's governess, and that his mind was made up to marry her. What! you're at it again, my man in the corner! You want to know her name, don't you! What do you think of Smith?

Speaking as a lawyer, I consider Report, in a general way, to be a fool and a liar. But in this case report turned out to be something very different. Mr. Frank told me he was really in love, and said upon his honor (an absurd expression which young chaps of his age are always using) he was determined to marry Smith the governess—the sweet darling girl, as *he* called her; but I'm not sentimental, and I call her Smith the governess (with an eye, of course, to refreshing the memory of my friend in the corner). Mr. Frank's father, being as proud as Lucifer, said "No" as to marrying the governess, when Mr. Frank wanted him to say "Yes." He was a man of business, was old Gatcliffe, and he took the proper business course. He sent the governess away with a first-rate character and a spanking present; and then he looked about him to get something for Mr. Frank to do. While he was looking about, Mr. Frank bolted to London after the governess, who had nobody alive belonging to her to go to, but an aunt—her father's sister. The aunt refuses to let Mr. Frank in without the squire's permission. Mr. Frank writes to his father, and says he will marry the girl as soon as he is of age, or shoot himself. Up to town comes the squire, and his wife, and his daughter; and a lot of sentimentality, not in the slightest degree material to the present statement, takes place among them; and the upshot of it is that old Gatcliffe is forced into withdrawing the word No, and substituting the word Yes.

I don't believe he would ever have done it, though, but for one lucky peculiarity in the case. The governess's father was a man of good family—pretty nigh as good as Gat-

life's own. He had been in the army; had sold out, set up as a wine merchant—failed—died: ditto his wife, as to the dying part of it. No relation, in fact, left for the squire to make inquiries about but the father's sister; who had behaved, as old Gatcliffe said, like a thorough-bred gentlewoman in shutting the door against Mr. Frank in the first instance. So, to cut the matter short, things were at last made up pleasant enough. The time was fixed for the wedding, and an announcement about it—Marriage in High Life and all that—put into the county paper. There was a regular biography, besides, of the governess's father, so as to stop people from talking; a great flourish about his pedigree, and a long account of his services in the army; but not a word, mind ye, of his having turned wine merchant afterwards. Oh, no—not a word about that! I knew it, though, for Mr. Frank told me. He hadn't a bit of pride about him. He introduced me to his future wife one day when I met them out walking, and asked me if I did not think he was a lucky fellow. I don't mind admitting that I did, and that I told him so. Ah! but she was one of my sort, was that governess. Stood, to the best of my recollection five foot four. Good lissome figure, that looked as if it had never been boxed up in a pair of stays. Eyes that made me feel as if I was under a pretty stiff cross-examination the moment she looked at me. Fine red, fresh, kiss-and-come-again sort of lips. Cheeks and complexion—. No, my man in the corner, you wouldn't identify her by her cheeks and complexion, if I drew you a picture of them this very moment. She has had a family of children since the time I'm talking of; and her cheeks are a trifle fatter and her complexion is a shade or two redder now, than when I first met her out walking with Mr. Frank.

The marriage was to take place on a Wednesday. I decline mentioning the year or the month. I had started as an attorney on my own account—say six weeks, more or less, and was sitting alone in my office on the Monday morning before the wedding-day, trying to see my way clear before me and not succeeding particularly well, when Mr. Frank suddenly bursts in, as white as any ghost that ever was painted, and says he's got the most dreadful case for me to advise on, and not an hour to lose in acting on my advice.

"Is this in the way of business, Mr. Frank?" says I, stopping him just as he was beginning to get sentimental. "Yes or no, Mr. Frank?" rapping my new office paper-knife on the table to pull him up short all the sooner.

"My dear fellow"—he was always familiar with me—"it's in the way of business, certainly; but friendship—"

I was obliged to pull him up short again

and regularly examine him as if he had been in the witness-box, or he would have kept me talking to no purpose half the day.

"Now, Mr. Frank," said I, "I can't have any sentimentality mixed up with business matters. You please to stop talking and let me ask questions. Answer in the fewest words you can use. Nod when nodding will do instead of words."

I fixed him with my eye for about three seconds, as he sat groaning and wriggling in his chair. When I'd done fixing him, I gave another rap with my paper-knife on to the table to startle him up a bit. Then I went on.

"From what you have been stating up to the present time," says I, "I gather that you are in a scrape which is likely to interfere seriously with your marriage on Wednesday?" (He nodded, and I cut in again before he could say a word). "The scrape affects the young lady you are about to marry, and goes back to the period of a certain transaction in which her late father was engaged some years ago?" (He nods, and I cut in once more.) "There is a party who turned up after seeing the announcement of your marriage in the paper, who is cognisant of what he oughtn't to know, and who is prepared to use his knowledge of the same, to the prejudice of the young lady and of your marriage, unless he receives a sum of money to quiet him? Very well. Now, first of all, Mr. Frank, state what you have been told by the young lady herself about the transaction of her late father. How did you first come to have any knowledge of it?"

"She was talking to me about her father one day, so tenderly and prettily, that she quite excited my interest about him," begins Mr. Frank; "and I asked her, among other things, what had occasioned his death. She said she believed it was distress of mind in the first instance; and added that this distress was connected with a shocking secret, which she and her mother had kept from everybody, but which she could not keep from me, because she was determined to begin her married life by having no secrets from her husband." Here Mr. Frank began to get sentimental again; and I pulled him up short once more with the paper-knife.

"She told me," Mr. Frank went on, "that the great mistake of her father's life was his selling out of the army and taking to the wine trade. He had no talent for business; things went wrong with him from the first. His clerk, it was strongly suspected, cheated him—"

"Stop a bit," says I. "What was that suspected clerk's name?"

"Davager," says he.

"Davager," says I, making a note of it "Go on, Mr. Frank."



"His affairs got more and more entangled," says Mr. Frank; "he was pressed for money in all directions; bankruptcy, and consequent dishonor (as he considered it) stared him in the face. His mind was so affected by his troubles that both his wife and daughter, towards the last, considered him to be hardly responsible for his own acts. In this state of desperation and misery, he——" Here Mr. Frank began to hesitate.

We have two ways in the law, of drawing evidence off nice and clear from an unwilling client or witness. We give him a fright or treat him to a joke. I treated Mr. Frank to a joke.

"Ah!" says I. "I know what he did. He had a signature to write; and, by the most natural mistake in the world, he wrote another gentleman's name instead of his own——eh?"

"It was to a bill," says Mr. Frank, looking very crestfallen, instead of taking the joke. "His principal creditor wouldn't wait till he could raise the money, or the greater part of it. But he was resolved, if he sold off everything, to get the amount and repay——"

"Of course!" says I. "Drop that. The forgery was discovered. When?"

"Before even the first attempt was made to negotiate the bill. He had done the whole thing in the most absurdly and innocently wrong way. The person whose name he had used was a staunch friend of his, and a relation of his wife's: a good man as well as a rich one. He had influence with the chief creditor, and he used it nobly. He had a real affection for the unfortunate man's wife, and he proved it generously."

"Come to the point," says I. "What did he do? In a business way, what did he do?"

"He put the false bill into the fire, drew a bill of his own to replace it, and then——only then——told my dear girl and her mother all that had happened. Can you imagine anything nobler?" asked Mr. Frank.

"Speaking in my professional capacity, I can't imagine anything greener!" says I. "Where was the father? Off, I suppose?"

"Ill in bed," said Mr. Frank, coloring. "But, he mustered strength enough to write a contrite and grateful letter the same day, promising to prove himself worthy of the noble moderation and forgiveness extended to him, by selling off everything he possessed to repay his money debt. He did sell off everything, down to some old family pictures that were heirlooms; down to the little plate he had; down to the very tables and chairs that furnished his drawing room. Every farthing of the debt was paid; and he was left to begin the world again, with the kindest promises of help from the gener-

ous man who had forgiven him. It was too late. His crime of one rash moment——atoned for though it had been——preyed upon his mind. He became possessed with the idea that he had lowered himself forever in the estimation of his wife and daughter, and——"

"He died," I cut in. "Yes, yes, we know that. Let's go back for a minute to the contrite and grateful letter that he wrote. My experience in the law, Mr. Frank, has convinced me that if everybody burnt everybody else's letters, half the Courts of Justice in this country might shut up shop. Do you happen to know whether the letter we are now speaking of contained anything like an avowal or confession of the forgery?"

"Of course it did," says he. "Could the writer express his contrition properly without making some such confession?"

"Quite easy, if he had been a lawyer," says I. "But never mind that; I'm going to make a guess,——a desperate guess, mind. Should I be altogether in error," says I, "if I thought that this letter had been stolen; and that the fingers of Mr. Davager, of suspicious commercial celebrity, might possibly be the fingers which took it?" says I.

"That is exactly what I tried to make you understand," cried Mr. Frank.

"How did he communicate that interesting fact to you?"

"He has not ventured into my presence. The scoundrel actually had the audacity——"

"Aha!" says I. "The young lady herself! Sharp practitioner, Mr. Davager."

"Early this morning, when she was walking alone in the shrubbery," Mr. Frank goes on, "he had the assurance to approach her, and to say that he had been watching his opportunity of getting a private interview for days past. He then showed her——actually showed her——her unfortunate father's letter; put into her hands another letter directed to me; bowed, and walked off; leaving her half dead with astonishment and terror!"

"It was much better for you that you were not there," says I. "Have you got that other letter?"

He handed it to me. It was so extremely humorous and short, that I remember every word of it at this distance of time. It began in this way:

"To Francis Gatcliffe, Esq., Jun.—Sir.—I have an extremely curious autograph letter to sell. The price is a Five hundred pound note. The young lady to whom you are to be married on Wednesday will inform you of the nature of the letter, and the genuineness of the autograph. If you refuse to deal, I shall send a copy to the local paper, and shall wait on your highly respected father with the original curiosity, on the afternoon of Tuesday next. Having come down here on family business, I have put up at the

family hotel—being to be heard of at the Gatcliffe Arms.

Your very obedient servant,  
"ALFRED DAVAGER."

"A clever fellow, that," says I, putting the letter into my private drawer.

"Clever!" cries Mr. Frank, "he ought to be horsewhipped within an inch of his life. I would have done it myself, but she made me promise, before she told me a word of the matter, to come straight to you."

"That was one of the wisest promises you ever made," says I. "We can't afford to bully this fellow, whatever else we may do with him. Don't think I am saying anything libellous against your excellent father's character when I assert that if he saw the letter he would insist on your marriage being put off, at the very least?"

"Feeling as my father does about my marriage, he would insist on its being dropped altogether, if he saw this letter," says Mr. Frank, with a groan. "But even that is not the worst of it. The generous, noble girl herself says, that if the letter appears in the paper, with all the unanswerable comments this scoundrel would be sure to add to it, she would rather die than hold me to my engagement—even if my father would let me keep it." He was a weak young fellow, and ridiculously fond of her. I brought him back to business with another rap of the paper-knife.

"Hold up, Mr. Frank," says I. "I have a question or two more. Did you think of asking the young lady whether, to the best of her knowledge, this infernal letter was the only written evidence of the forgery now in existence?"

"Yes, I did think directly of asking her that, says he; "and she told me she was quite certain that there was no written evidence of the forgery, except that one letter."

"Will you give Mr. Davager his price for it?" says I.

"Yes," says Mr. Frank, as quick as lightning.

"Mr. Frank," says I, "you came here to get my help and advice in this extremely ticklish business, and you are ready, as I know, without asking, to remunerate me for all and any of my services at the usual professional rate. Now, I've made up my mind to act boldly—desperately, if you like—on the hit or miss—win-all-or-lose-all principle—in dealing with this matter. Here is my proposal. I'm going to try if I can't do Mr. Davager out of his letter. If I don't succeed before to-morrow afternoon, you hand him the money, and I charge you nothing for professional services. If I do succeed, I hand you the letter instead of Mr. Davager; and you give me the money, instead of giving it to him. It's a precious risk for me, but I'm ready to run it. You must pay your

five hundred any way. What do you say to my plan? Is it, Yes—Mr. Frank—or, No?"

"Hang your questions!" cries Mr. Frank, jumping up; "you know it's Yes, ten thousand times over. Only you earn the money and——"

"And you will be too glad to give it to me. Very good. Now go home. Comfort the young lady—don't let Mr. Davager so much as set eyes on you—keep quiet—leave everything to me—and feel as certain as you please that all the letters in the world can't stop your being married on Wednesday." With these words I hustled him off out of the office; for I wanted to be left alone to make my mind up about what I should do.

The first thing, of course, was to have a look at the enemy. I wrote to Mr. Davager, telling him that I was privately appointed to arrange the little business-matter between himself and "another party" (no names!) on friendly terms; and begging him to call on me at his earliest convenience. At the very beginning of the case, Mr. Davager bothered me. His answer was that it would not be convenient to him to call till between six and seven in the evening. In this way, you see, he contrived to make me lose several precious hours, at a time when minutes almost were of importance. I had nothing for it, but to be patient, and to give certain instructions, before Mr. Davager came, to my boy Tom.

There was never such a sharp boy of fourteen before, and there never will be again, as my boy, Tom. A spy to look after Mr. Davager was, of course, the first requisite in a case of this kind; and Tom was the smallest, quickest, quietest, sharpest, stealthiest little snake of a chap that ever dogged a gentleman's steps and kept cleverly out of range of a gentleman's eyes. I settled it with the boy that he was not to show at all, when Mr. Davager came; and that he was to wait to hear me ring the bell when Mr. Davager left. If I rang twice he was to show the gentleman out. If I rang once, he was to keep out of the way and follow the gentleman wherever he went, till he got back to the inn. Those were the only preparations I could make to begin with; being obliged to wait, and let myself be guided by what turned up.

About a quarter to seven my gentleman came. In the profession of the law we get somehow quite remarkably mixed up with ugly people, blackguard people, and dirty people. But far away the ugliest and dirtiest blackguard I ever saw in my life was Mr. Alfred Davager. He had greasy white hair and a mottled face. He was low in the forehead, fat in the stomach, hoarse in the voice, and weak in the legs. Both his eyes were bloodshot, and one was fixed in his head. He smelt of spirits, and carried a toothpick in his mouth. "How are you?"

"I've just done dinner," says he—and he lights a cigar, sits down with his legs crossed, and winks at me.

I tried at first to take the measure of him in a wheedling, confidential way; but it was no good. I asked him in a facetious smiling manner, how he had got hold of the letter. He only told me in answer that he had been in the confidential employment of the writer of it, and that he had always been famous since infancy, for a sharp eye to his own interests. I paid him some compliments; but he was not to be flattered. I tried to make him lose his temper; but he kept it in spite of me. It ended in his driving me to my last resource—I made an attempt to frighten him.

"Before we say a word about the money," I began, "let me put a case, Mr. Davager. The pull you have on Mr. Francis Gatliffe is, that you can hinder his marriage on Wednesday. Now, suppose I have got a magistrate's warrant to apprehend you in my pocket? Suppose I have a constable to execute it in the next room? Suppose I bring you up to-morrow—the day before the marriage—charge you only generally with an attempt to extort money, and apply for a day's remand to complete the case? Suppose, as a suspicious stranger, you can't get bail in this town? Suppose——"

"Stop a bit," says Mr. Davager; "Suppose I should not be the greenest fool that ever stood in shoes? Suppose I should not carry the letter about me? Suppose I should have given a certain envelope to a certain friend of mine in a certain place in this town? Suppose the letter should be inside that envelope, directed to old Gatliffe, side by side with a copy of the letter, directed to the editor of the local paper? Suppose my friend should be instructed to open the envelope, and take the letters to their right addresses, if I don't appear to claim them from him this evening? In short, my dear sir, suppose you were born yesterday, and suppose I wasn't?"—says Mr. Davager, and winks at me again.

He didn't take me by surprise, for I never expected that he had the letter about him. I made a pretence of being very much taken aback, and of being quite ready to give in. We settled our business about delivering the letter and handing over the money, in no time. I was to draw out a document, which he was to sign. He knew the document was stuff and nonsense just as well as I did; and told me I was only proposing it to swell my client's bill. Sharp as he was, he was wrong there. The document was not to be drawn out to gain money from Mr. Frank, but to gain time from Mr. Davager. It served me as an excuse to put off the payment of the five hundred pounds till three o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon. The Tuesday morning Mr. Davager said he should devote to his

amusement, and asked me what sights were to be seen in the neighborhood of the town. When I had told him, he pitched his tooth-pick into my grate—yawned—and went out.

I rang the bell once; waited till he had passed the window; and then looked after Tom. There was my jewel of a boy on the opposite side of the street, just setting his top going in the most playful manner possible. Mr. Davager walked away up the street, towards the market-place. Tom whipped his top up the street towards the market-place too.

In a quarter of an hour he came back, with all his evidence collected in a beautifully clear and compact state. Mr. Davager had walked to a public house, just outside the town, in a lane leading to the high road. On a bench outside the public-house there sat a man smoking. He said "All right?" and gave a letter to Mr. Davager, who answered "All right," and walked back to the inn. In the hall he ordered hot rum and water, cigars, slippers, and a fire to be lit in his room. After that, he went up stairs, and Tom came away.

I now saw my road clear before me—not very far on, but still clear. I had housed the letter, in all probability for that night, at the Gatliffe Arms. After tipping Tom, I gave him directions to play about the door of the inn, and refresh himself, when he was tired, at the tart-shop opposite—eating as much as he pleased, on the understanding that he crammed all the time with his eye on the window. If Mr. Davager went out, or Mr. Davager's friend called on him, Tom was to let me know. He was also to take a little note from me to the head chambermaid—an old friend of mine—asking her to step over to my office, on a private matter of business, as soon as her work was done for that night. After settling these little matters, having half an hour to spare, I turned to and did myself a bloater at the office-fire, and had a drop of gin and water hot, and felt comparatively happy.

When the head chambermaid came, it turned out, as good luck would have it, that Mr. Davager had offended her. I no sooner mentioned him than she flew into a passion; and when I added, by way of clinching the matter, that I was retained to defend the interests of a very beautiful and deserving young lady (name not referred to, of course) against the most cruel underhand treachery on the part of Mr. Davager, the head chambermaid was ready to go any lengths that she could safely, to serve my cause. In few words, I discovered that Boots was to call Mr. Davager, at eight the next morning, and was to take his clothes down stairs to brush as usual. If Mr. D., had not emptied his own pockets overnight, we arranged that Boots was to forget to empty them for him, and was to bring the clothes down stairs



just as he found them. If Mr. D.'s pockets were emptied, then, of course, it would be necessary to transfer the searching process to Mr. D.'s room. Under any circumstances, I was certain of the head chambermaid; and under any circumstances also, the head chambermaid was certain of Boots.

I waited till Tom came home, looking very puffy and bilious about the face; but as to his intellects, if anything, rather sharper than ever. His report was uncommonly short and pleasant. The inn was shutting up; Mr. Davager was going to bed in rather a drunken condition; Mr. Davager's friend had never appeared. I sent Tom (properly instructed about keeping our man in view all the next morning) to his shake-down behind the office desk, where I heard him hiccupping half the night, as boys will when over-excited and too full of tarts.

At half-past seven next morning, I slipped quietly into Boot's pantry. Down came the clothes. No pockets in trousers. Waistcoat pockets empty. Coat pockets with something in them. First, handkerchief; secondly, bunch of keys; thirdly, cigar-case; fourthly, pocket-book. Of course I wasn't such a fool as to expect to find a letter there; but I opened the pocket-book with a certain curiosity, notwithstanding.

Nothing in the two pockets of the book but some old advertisements cut out of newspapers, a lock of hair tied round with a dirty bit of ribbon, a circular letter about a loan society, and some copies of verses not likely to suit any company that was not of an extremely wicked description. On the leaves of the pocket-book, people's addresses scrawled in pencil, and bets jotted down in red ink. On one leaf, by itself, this queer inscription: "MEM. 5 ALONG. 4 ACROSS." I understood everything but those words and figures; so of course I copied them out into my own book. Then I waited in the pantry, till Boots had brushed the clothes and had taken them up stairs. His report, when he came down was, that Mr. D. had asked if it was a fine morning. Being told that it was, he had ordered breakfast at nine, and a saddle-horse to be at the door at ten, to take him to Grimwith Abbey—one of the sights in our neighborhood which I had told him of the evening before.

"I'll be here, coming in by the back way at half-past ten," says I to the head chambermaid, "to take the responsibility of making Mr. Davager's bed off your hands for this morning only. I want to hire Sam for the morning. Put it down in the order-book that he's to be brought round to my office at ten."

Sam was a pony, and I'd made up my mind that it would be beneficial to Tom's health, after the tarts, if he took a constitutional airing on a nice hard saddle in the direction of Grimwith Abbey.

"Anything else," says the head chambermaid.

"Only one more favor," says I. "Would my boy Tom be very much in the way if he came, from now till ten, to help with the boots and shoes, and stood at his work close by this window which looks out on the staircase?"

"Not a bit," says the head chambermaid.

"Thank you," says I; and stepped back to my office directly.

When I had sent Tom off to help with the boots and shoes, I reviewed the whole case exactly as it stood at that time. There were three things Mr. Davager might do with the letter. He might give it to his friend again before ten—in which case, Tom would most likely see the said friend, on the stairs. He might take it to his friend, or to some other friend, after ten—in which case, Tom was ready to follow him on Sam the pony. And, lastly, he might leave it hidden somewhere in his room at the inn—in which case, I was all ready for him with a search-warrant of my own granting, under favor always of my friend the head chambermaid. So far I had my business arrangements all gathered up nice and compact in my own hands. Only two things bothered me: the terrible shortness of the time at my disposal, in case I failed in my first experiments for getting hold of the letter, and that queer inscription which I had copied out of the pocket-book.

"MEM. 5 ALONG. 4 ACROSS." It was the measurement, most likely, of something, and he was afraid of forgetting it; therefore, it was something important. Query—something about himself! Say "5" (inches) "along"—he doesn't wear a wig. Say "5" (feet) "along"—it can't be coat, waistcoat, trousers, or underclothing. Say "5" (yards) "along"—it can't be anything about himself, unless he wears round his body the rope that he's sure to be hanged with one of these days. Then it is *not* something about himself. What do I know of that is important to him besides? I know of nothing but the letter. Can the memorandum be connected with that? Say, yes. What do "5 along" and "4 across" mean then? The measurement of something he carries about with him?—or the measurement of something in his room? I could get pretty satisfactorily to myself as far as that; but I could get no further.

Tom came back to the office, and reported him mounted for his ride. His friend had never appeared. I sent the boy off, with his proper instructions, on Sam's back—wrote an encouraging letter to Mr. Frank to keep him quiet—then slipped into the inn by the back way a little before half-past ten. The head chambermaid gave me a signal when the landing was clear. I got into his room without a soul but her seeing me, and locked

the door immediately. The case was to a certain extent, simplified now. Either Mr. Davager had ridden out with the letter about him, or he had left it in some safe hiding-place in his room. I suspected it to be in his room, for a reason that will a little astonish you—his trunk, his dressing-case, and all the drawers and cupboards were left open. I knew my customer, and I thought this extraordinary carelessness on his part rather suspicious.

Mr. Davager had taken one of the best bedrooms at the Gatcliffe Arms. Floor carpeted all over, walls beautifully papered, four-poster, and general furniture first-rate. I searched, to begin with, on the usual plan, examining everything in every possible way, and taking more than an hour about it. No discovery. Then I pulled out a carpenter's rule which I had brought with me. Was there anything in the room which—either in inches, feet, or yards—answered to "5 along" and "4 across"? Nothing. I put the rule back in my pocket—measurement was no good evidently. Was there anything in the room that would count up to 5 one way and 4 another, seeing that nothing would measure up to it? I had got obstinately persuaded by this time that the letter must be in the room—principally because of the trouble I had had in looking after it. And persuading myself of that, I took it into my head next, just as obstinately, that "5 along" and "4 across" must be the right clue to find the letter by—principally because I hadn't left myself, after all my searching and thinking, even so much as the vestige of another guide to go by. "5 along"—where could I count five along the room, in any part of it?

Not on the paper. The pattern there was pillars of trellis work and flowers, enclosing a plain green ground—only four pillars along the wall and only two across. The furniture? There was not five chairs, or five separate pieces of any furniture in the room altogether. The fringes that hung from the cornice of the bed? Plenty of them at any rate! Up I jumped on the counterpane, with my penknife in my hand. Every way that "5 along" and "4 across" could be reckoned on those unlucky fringes, I reckoned on them—probed with my penknife—scratched with my nails—crushed with my fingers. No use; not a sign of a letter; and the time was getting on—oh, Lord! how the time did get on in Mr. Davager's room that morning.

I jumped down from the bed, so desperate at my ill-luck that I hardly cared whether anybody heard me or not. Quite a little cloud of dust arose at my feet as they thumped on the carpet. "Hallo!" thought I; "my friend the head chambermaid takes it easy here. Nice state for a carpet to be in, in one of the best bed-

rooms at the Gatcliffe Arms." Carpet! I had been jumping up on the bed, and staring up at the walls, but I had never so much as given a glance down at the carpet. Think of me pretending to be a lawyer, and not knowing how to look low enough?

The carpet! It had been a stout article in its time; had evidently begun in a drawing-room; then descended to a coffee-room; then gone upstairs altogether to a bedroom. The ground was brown, and pattern was bunches of leaves and roses speckled over the ground at regular distances. I reckoned up the bunches. Ten along the room—eight across it. When I had stepped out five one way and four the other, and was down on my knees on the centre bunch, as true as I sit on this bench, I could hear my own heart beating so loud that it quite frightened me.

I looked narrowly all over the bunch, and I felt all over it with the ends of my fingers; and nothing came of that. Then I scraped it over slowly and gently with my nails. My second finger-nail stuck a little at one place. I parted the pile of the carpet over that place, and saw a thin slit, which had been hidden by the pile being smoothed over it—a slit about half an inch long, with a little end of brown thread, exactly the colour of the carpet-ground, sticking out about a quarter of an inch from the middle of it. Just as I laid hold of the thread gently, I heard a footstep outside the door.

It was only the head chambermaid, "Havn't you done yet?" she whispers.

"Give me two minutes," says I; "and don't let anybody come near the door—whatever you do don't let anybody startle me again by coming near the door."

I took a little pull at the thread, and heard something rustle. I took a longer pull, and out came a piece of paper, rolled up tight like those candle-lighters that the ladies make. I unrolled it—and, by George! gentlemen all, there was the letter!

The original letter!—I knew it by the colour of the ink. The letter was worth five hundred pounds to me! It was all I could do to keep myself at first from throwing my hat into the air, and hoo-aying like mad. I had to take a chair and sit quiet in it for a minute or two, before I could cool myself down to my proper business level. I knew that I was safely down again when I found myself pondering how to let Mr. Davager know that he had been done by the innocent country attorney, after all.

It was not long before a nice little irritating plan occurred to me. I tore a blank leaf out of my pocket-book, wrote on it with my pencil "Change for a five hundred pound note," folded up the paper, tied the thread to it, poked it back into the hiding place, smoothed over the pile of the carpet, and—as everybody in this place guesses



before I can tell them—bolted off to Mr. Frank. He, in his turn, bolted off to show the letter to the young lady, who first certified to its genuineness, then dropped it into the fire, and then took the initiative for the first time since her marriage engagement, by flinging her arms round his neck, kissing him with all her might, and going into hysterics in his arms. So at least Mr. Frank told me; but that's not evidence. It is evidence, however, that I saw them married with my own eyes on the Wednesday; and that while they went off in a carriage for to spend the honeymoon, I went off on my own legs to open a credit at the Town and County Bank with a five hundred pound note in my pocket.

As to Mr. Davager, I can tell you nothing about him, except what is derived from hearsay evidence, which is always unsatisfactory evidence, even in a lawyer's mouth.

My boy Tom, though twice kicked off by Sam the pony, never lost hold of the bridle, and kept his man in sight from first to last. He had nothing particular to report, except that on the way out to the Abbey Mr. Davager had stopped at the public-house, had spoken a word or two to his friend of the

night before, and had handed him what looked like a bit of paper. This was no doubt a clue to the thread that held the letter, to be used in case of accidents. In every other respect Mr. D. had ridden out and ridden in like an ordinary sight-seer. Tom reported him to me as having dismounted at the hotel about two. At half-past I locked my office door, nailed a card under the knocker with "not at home till to-morrow" written on it, and retired to a friend's house a mile or so out of the town for the rest of the day.

Mr. Davager left the Gatcliffe Arms that night with his best clothes on his back, and with all the valuable contents of his dressing-case in his pockets. I am not in a condition to state whether he ever went through the form of asking for his bill or not; but I can positively testify that he never paid it, and that the effects left in his bedroom did not pay it either. When I add to these fragments of evidence, that he and I have never met (luckily for me), since I jockeyed him out of his bank note, I have about fulfilled my implied contract as maker of a statement, with the present company as hearers of a statement

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## THE FIFTH POOR TRAVELLER.

Do you know—the journeyman watch-maker from Geneva began—do you know those long straight lines of French country, over which I have often walked? Do you know those rivers, so long, so uniform in breadth, so dully gray in hue, that in despair at their regularity, momentarily libel nature as being only a grand canal commissioner after all? Do you know the long funeral rows of poplars, or dreary parallelograms of osiers, that fringe those river banks; the long white roads, hedgeless, but, oh! so dismally ditchful; the long low stone walls; the long farmhouses, without a spark of the robust, leafy, cheerful life of the English homesteads; the long fields, scarcely ever green, but of an ashen tone, wearily furrowed, as though the earth had grown old and was beginning to show the crow's feet; the long interminable gray French landscape? The sky itself seems longer than it ought to be; and the clouds stretch away to goodness knows where in long low banks, as if the heavens had been ruled with a parallel. If a vehicle passes you it is only a wofully long diligence—lengthened yellow ugliness long drawn out, with a seemingly endless team of horses,

and a long, stifling cloud of dust behind it; a driver for the wheelers with a whip seven times as long as it ought to be; and a postillion for the leaders with boots long enough for seven-leaguers. His oaths are long; the horses' manes are long; their tails are so long that they are obliged to have them tied up with straw. The stages are long, the journey long, the fares long—the whole longitudinal carriage leaves a long melancholy jingle of bells behind it.

Yes: French scenery is very lengthy; so I settled in my mind at least as I walked with long strides along the white French road. A longer me—my shadow—walked before me, bending its back and drooping its arms, and angularising its elongated legs like drowsy compasses. The shadow looked tired: I felt so. I had been oppressed by length all day. I had passed a long procession—some hundreds of boys in gray great coats and red trowsers; soldiers. I had found their guns and bayonets too long; their coats disproportionately lengthy; the moustaches of their officers, ridiculously elongated. There was no end of them—their rolling drums, baggage waggons, and led horses. I had passed a team of bullocks

ploughing; they looked as long as the lane that hath no turning. A long man followed them smoking a long pipe. A wretched pig I saw, too—a long, lean, bristly, lanky-legged monstrosity, without even a curly tail, for his tail was long and pendant; a miserable pig, half-snouted greyhound, half-abashed weazel, whole hog, and an eyesore to me. I was a long way from home. I had the spleen, I wanted something short—not to drink, but a short break in the long landscape, a house, a knoll, a clump of trees—anything to relieve this long purgatory.

Whenever I feel inclined to take a more than ordinarily dismal view of things, I find it expedient to take a pipe of tobacco instead. As I wanted to rest, however, as well as smoke, I had to walk another long mile. When I desiered a house, in front thereof was a huge felled tree, and on the tree I sat and lighted my pipe. The day was of no particular character whatever; neither wet nor dry, cold nor hot—neither springy, summery, autumnal, nor wintry.

The house I was sitting opposite to, might have been one of public entertainment (for it was a cabaret) if there had been any public in the neighborhood to be entertained, which (myself excepted) I considered doubtful. It seemed to me as if Bacchus, roving about on the loose, had dropped a stray tub here on the solitary road, and no longer coming that way, the tub itself had gone to decay—had become unhooped, mouldy, leaky. I declare that, saving a certain fanciful resemblance to the barrel on which the god of wine is generally supposed to take horse exercise, the house had no more shape than a lump of cheese that one might dig hap-hazard from a soft double Gloucester. The windows were patches and the doorway had evidently been made subsequently to the erection of the building, and looked like an excrescence as it was. The top of the house had been pelted with mud, thatch, tiles, and slates, rather than roofed; and a top room jutted out laterally from one of the walls, supported beneath by crazy uprights, like a poor relation clinging to a genteel kinsman nearly as poor. The walls had been plastered once, but the plaster had peeled off in places, and mud and wattles peeped through like a beggar's bare knee through his torn trowsers. An anomalous wooden ruin, that might have been a barrel in the beginning, then a dog-kennel, then a dust-bin, then a hen-coop, seemed fast approximating (eked out by some rotten pailings and half a deal box) to a pigstye: perhaps my enemy the long pig with the pendant tail lived there when he was at home. A lively old birch-broom, senile but twiggy, thriving under a kindly manure of broken bottles and woodashes, was the only apology for trees, hedges, or vegetation generally, visible. If wood was deficient, how-

ever, there was plenty of water. Behind the house, where it had been apparently raining for some years, a highly respectable puddle, as far as mud and stagnation went, had formed, and on the surface of it drifted a solitary, purposeless, soleless old shoe, and one dismal duck, which no amount of green peas would have ever persuaded me to eat. There was a chimney to the house, but not in the proper place, of course; it came out of one of the walls, close to the impromptu pigstye, in the shape of a rusty, battered iron funnel. There had never been anything to speak of done in the way of painting to the house; only some erratic journeyman painter passing that way had tried his brushes, in red, green, and yellow smudges on the wall; had commenced dead coloring one of the window sills; and had then given it up as a bad job. Some pretentious announcements relative to "Good wines and liquors" and "Il y a un billard," there had been once above the door, but the rain had washed out some of the letters, and the smoke had obscured others, and the plaster had peeled off from beneath more; and some, perhaps, the writer had never finished; so the inscriptions were a mere wandering piece of idiotcy now. If anything were wanted to complete the general wretchedness of this house of dismal appearance, it would have been found in the presence of a ghostly set of ninepins that Rip Van Winkle might have played with.

All these things were not calculated to inspire cheerfulness. I continued smoking, however, and thought that, by-and-by, I would enter the cabaret, and see if there were any live people there; which appeared unlikely.

All at once, there came out to me from the house a little man. It is not at all derogating from his manhood, to state that he was also a little boy, of perhaps eight years old; but in look, in eye, in weird fur-cap, in pea-coat, blue canvas trowsers, and sabots, he was at least thirty-seven years of age. He had a remarkable way, too, of stroking his chin with his hand. He looked at me long and fully, but without the slightest rudeness, or intrusive curiosity; then sitting by my side on the great felled tree, he smoked a mental pipe (so it appeared to me), while I smoked a material one. Once, I think, he softly felt the texture of my coat; but I did not turn my head, and pretended not to notice.

We were getting on thus, very sociably together, without saying a word, when, having finished my pipe, I replaced it in my pouch, and began to remove a little of the superfluous dust from my boots. My pulverous appearance was the cue for the little man to address himself to speech.

"I see," said he, gravely, "you are one of those Poor Travellers whom mamma tells

us we are to take such care of. Attend, attend; I will do your affair for you in a moment."

He trotted across to the cabaret, and after a lapse of two or three minutes, returned with a tremendous hunch of bread, a cube of cheese—which smelt, as the Americans say, rather loud, but was excellently well tasted—and an anomalous sort of vessel, that was neither a jug, a mug, a cup, a glass, nor a pint-pot, but partook of the characteristics of all—full of Macon wine.

"This is Friday," added the little man, and meagre day, else should you be regaled with sausage—and of Lyons—of which we have as long as that." Saying which, he extended his little arms to perhaps half a yard's distance one from the other.

I did not care to inform the little man that I was of a persuasion that did not forbid the eating of sausages on Fridays. I ate the bread and cheese, and drank the wine, all of which were very good and very palatable, very contentedly; the little man sitting by, the while, nursing one of his short legs, and talking to himself softly.

When I had finished, I lighted another pipe, and went in for conversation with the little man. We soon exhausted the ordinary topics of conversation, such as the weather, the distance from the last town, and the distance to the next. I found that the little man's forte was interrogatory, and let him have his swing that way.

"You come from a long way?" he asked.

"A long way," I answered. "From beyond the Sous-prefecture, beyond Nantes, beyond Brest and L'Orient."

"But from a town always? You come from a town where there are a great many people, and where they make wheels?"

I answered that I came from a large town, and that I had no doubt, though I had no personal experience in the matter, that wheels were made there.

"And cannot you make wheels?"

I told him I was not a wheelwright; I only made the wheels of watches, which were not the wheels he meant.

"Because," the little man went on to say, softly, and more to himself than to me, "mamma said he liked to live in towns, where there were many people, and M. le Curé said that wherever wheels were made, he could gain his bread."

I could not make much of this statement, so I puffed away at my pipe, and listened.

"By the way," my small but elderly companion remarked, "would you have any objection to my bringing my sister to you?"

The more I saw of so original a family the better, I thought; so I told him I should be delighted to see his sister.

He crossed over to the cabaret again, and almost immediately afterwards returned, leading a little maid.

She seemed about a year younger, or a year older than her brother. I could not tell which. It did not matter which. She was very fair, and her auburn locks were confined beneath a little prim blue cap. Mittens, a striped woollen shirt, a smart white chemisette, blue hose, and trim little sabots,—all these had the little maid. She had a little chain and golden cross; a pair of scissors hanging by a string to her girdle, a black tabinet apron, and a little silver ring on the forefinger of her left hand. Her eyes were very blue, but they could not see my dusty boots, my pipe, and three days' beard. They could not see the great felled tree, her brother, in his pea-coat, the sky, the sun going down beyond the long straight banks of trees. They had never seen any of these things. The little maid was blind.

She had known all about me, however, as far as the boots, the pipe, the dust, the bread and cheese, my having come a long way, and not being a wheelwright, went, long since. At least, she seemed quite au fait on general topics connected with my social standing, or rather sitting, on the tree; and taking a seat on one side of me, her brother, the little man, on the other, the two little children began to chatter most delightfully.

Mamma worked in the fields—in her own fields. She had three fields; fields large as that (distance measured by little maid's arms, after the manner of her brother, in reference to the sausage question). Papa made wheels. They loved him very much, but he beat mamma, and drank wine by cannons. When he was between two wines (that is, drunk), he knocked Lili's head against the wall (Lili was the little man). When M. le Curé tried to bring him to a sense of the moral, he laughed at his nose. He was a farceur, was papa. He made beautiful wheels, and earned money like that (arm measurement again), except when he went weddingising (nocer), when he always came back between two wines, and between the two fell to the ground. Papa went away a long time, a very long time ago; before the white calf at the farm was born. Before André drew the bad number in the conscription, and went away to Africa. Before Lili had his grand malady (little man looked a hundred years old, with the conscious experience of a grand malady). What was it? Elephantiasis, spasmodic neuralgia? Something wonderful, with a long name, I am sure). Papa sold the brown horse, and the great bed in oak, before he went away. He also briséd mamma's head with a bottle, previous to his departure. He was coming back some day. He was sure to come back. M. le Curé said no, and that he was a worth-nothing, but mamma said, Yes, and cried; though, for my part," concluded the little maid, when



between herself and brother she had told me all this, "*I think that poor papa never will come back, but he has gone away among those Bedouin Turks, who are so méchants, and that they have eaten him up.*"

The little blind fairy made this statement with an air of such positive, yet mild conviction, crossing her mites of hands in her lap as she did so, that for the moment I would have no more attempted to question the prevalence of cannibalism in Constantinople than to deny the existence of the setting sun.

While these odd little people were thus entertaining me, Heaven knows where my thoughts were wandering. This strange life they led. The mother away at work, the drunken wheelwright father a fugitive (he must have been an awful ruffian), and, strangest of all strange phases, that these two little ones should be left to keep a public house! I thought of all these things, and then my thoughts came back to, and centred themselves in, the weird little figure of the blind girl beside me. It was but a poor little blind girl, in a blue petticoat and sabots; yet so exquisitely regular were the features, so golden the hair, so firm, and smooth, and white—not marble, not wax, not ivory, yet partaking of all three, the complexion, so symmetrical every line, and so gloriously harmonious the whole combination of lines, that the little maid might have been taken then and there as she sat, popped in a frame, with "*Raffaëlle pinxit,*" in the corner, and purchased on the nail for five thousand guineas.

I could not help noticing from time to time, during our conversation, that the little man in the pea-coat turned aside to whisper somewhat mysteriously to his sister, and then looked at me more mysteriously still. He appeared to have something on his mind, and after a nod of apparent acquiescence on the part of the little blind girl, it soon came out what the something was.

"My sister and I," said this small person, "hope that you will not be offended with us; but would you have any objection to show us your tongue?"

This was, emphatically, a startler. Could the little man be a physician, as well as a publican? I did as he asked me, though I am afraid I looked very foolish, and shut my eyes as I thrust forth the member he desired to inspect. He appeared highly gratified with the sight of my tongue, communicating the results of his observation thereof to his sister, who clapped her hands, and seemed much pleased. Then he condescended to explain.

"You see," said he, "that you told us you came from a distant country; that is well seen, for though you speak French like a little sheep, you do not speak it with the same tongue that we do."

My experience of the court-martial scene in Black-eyed Susan, had taught me that it was possible to play the fiddle like an angel; but this was the first time I had ever heard of a grown man talking like a little sheep. I took it as a compliment, however (whether I was right or wrong in doing so is questionable), and waited to hear more.

"And my sister says that the reason why all strangers from far countries cannot speak as we do, is because they have a dark line right down their tongues. Now you must have a line down your tongue, though I am not tall enough to see it!"

The creed of this valiant little fellow in respect to lines and tongues had evidently been built long since, upon a rock of ages of loving faith in what his sister had told him. Besides, how do I know? I never saw my tongue except in a looking-glass, and that may have been false. My tongue may have five hundred lines crossing it at every imaginable angle, for aught I know.

So, we three, oddly assorted trio, went chattering on, till the shadows warned me that twilight was fast approaching, and that I had two miles to walk to the town where I had appointed to sleep. Remembering then, that the little man had "done my affair for me," in an early stage of our interview in the way of bread and cheese and wine, and not choosing to be really the poor traveller I seemed, I drew out a five-franc piece and proffered payment.

Both the children refused the coin; and the little maid said gravely, "*Mamma said that we were always to take care of poor travellers. What we have given you is pour l'amour de Dieu,—for God's sake.*"

I tried to force some trifle on them as a gift, but they would have none of my coin. Seeing then that I looked somewhat disappointed, the little man, like a profound diplomatist as he was, smoothed away the difficulty in a moment.

"If you like to go as far as you can see to the right, towards the town," he said, "you will find a blind old woman, playing upon a flageolet, and sitting at a caketall by the way-side. And if you like to buy us some gingerbread:—for three sous she will give you—oh! like that!" For the last time in this history he extended his arms in sign of measurement.

I went as far as I could see, which was not far, and found the blind old woman playing on a flageolet, and not seeing at all. Of her did I purchase gingerbread with brave white almonds in it: following my own notions of measurement, I may hint, in respect to the number of sous worth.

Bringing it back to the children, I took them up, and kissed them and bade them good-bye. Then I left them to the gingerbread and the desolate cabaret, until mamma should return from the fields, and that

famous domestic institution, the "soupe," of which frequent mention had already been made during our intercourse, should be ready.

I have never seen them since; I shall

never see them again; but, if it ever be my lot to be no longer solitary, I pray that I may have a boy and girl, as wise and good, and innocent as I am sure those little children were.

## THE SIXTH POOR TRAVELLER

WAS the little widow. She had been sitting by herself in the darkest corner of the room all this time; her pale face often turned anxiously toward the door, and her hollow eyes watching restlessly, as if she expected some one to appear. She was very quiet, very grateful for any little kindness, very meek in the midst of her wildness. There was a strained expression in her eyes, and a certain excited air about her altogether, that was very near insanity; it seemed as if she had once been terrified by some sudden shock, to the verge of madness.

When her turn came to speak, she began in a low voice—her eyes still glancing to the door—and spoke as if to herself rather than to the rest of us; speaking low but rapidly—somewhat like a somnambule repeating a lesson.

They advised me not to marry him (she began). They told me he was wild—unprincipled—bad; but I did not care for what they said. I loved him and I disobeyed them. I never thought about his goodness—I only knew that he was beautiful and gifted beyond all that I had ever met with in our narrow society. I loved him, with no passing school-girl fancy, but with my whole heart—my whole soul. I had no life, no joy, no hope without him, and heaven would have been no heaven to me if he had not been there. I say all this, simply to show what a madness of devotion mine was.

My dear mother was very kind to me throughout. She had loved my father, I believe, almost to the same extent; so that she could sympathise with me even while discouraging. She told me that I was wrong and foolish, and that I should repent; but I kissed away the painful lines between her eyes, and made her smile when I tried to prove to her that love was better than prudence. So we married: not so much without the consent as against the wish of my family; and even that wish withheld in sorrow and in love. I remember all this now, and see the true proportions of everything; then, I was blinded by my passions, and understood nothing.

We went away to our pretty, bright home

in one of the neighborhoods of London, near a park. We lived there for many months—I in a state of intoxication rather than of earthly happiness, and he was happy, too, then, for I am sure he was innocent, and I know he loved me. Oh, dreams—dreams!

I did not know my husband's profession. He was always busy and often absent; but he never told me what he did. There had been no settlements either, when I married. He said he had a conscientious scruple against them; that they were insulting to a man's honor and degrading to any husband. This was one of the reasons why, at home, they did not wish me to marry him. But I was only glad to be able to show him how I trusted him, by meeting his wishes and refusing, on my own account, to accept the legal protection of settlements. It was such a pride to me to sacrifice all to him. Thus I knew nothing of his real life—his pursuits or his fortunes. I never asked him any questions, as much from indifference to everything but his love as from a wifely blindness of trust. When he came home at night, sometimes very gay, singing opera songs and calling me his little Medora, as he used when in a good humor, I was gay too, and grateful. And when he came home moody and irritable—which he used to do, often, after we had been married about three months, once even threatening to strike me, with that fearful glare in his eyes I remember so well, and used to see so often afterwards—then I was patient and silent, and never attempted even to take his hand or kiss his forehead when he bade me be still and not interrupt him. He was my law, and his approbation the sunshine of my life; so that my very obedience was selfishness: for my only joy was to see him happy, and my only duty to obey him.

My sister came to visit us. My husband had seen very little of her before our marriage; for she had often been from home when he was with us, down at Hurst Farm—that was the name of my dear mother's place—and I had always fancied they had not liked even the little they had seen of each other. Ellen was never loud or impor-

fortunate in her opposition. I knew that she did not like the marriage, but she did not interfere. I remember quite well the only time she spoke openly to me on the subject, how she flung herself at my knees, with a passion very rare in her, beseeching me to pause and reflect, as if I had sold myself to my ruin when I promised to be Harry's wife. How she prayed! Poor Ellen! I can see her now, with her heavy, uncurled hair falling on her neck as she knelt half undressed, her large eyes full of agony and supplication, like a martyred saint praying. Poor Ellen! I thought her prejudiced then; and this unspoken injustice has lain like a heavy crime on my heart ever since; for I know that I judged her wrongfully, and that I was ungrateful for her love.

She came to see us. This was about a year and a half after I married. She was more beautiful than ever, but somewhat sterner, as well as sadder. She was tall, strong in person, and dignified in manner. There was a certain manly character in her beauty, as well as in her mind, that made one respect and fear her too a little. I do not mean that she was masculine, or hard, or coarse; she was a true woman in grace and gentleness; but she was braver than women in general. She had more self-reliance, was more resolute and steadfast, and infinitely less impulsive, and was more active and powerful in body.

My husband was very kind to her. He paid her great attention; and sometimes I half perceived that he liked her almost better than he liked me—he used to look at her so often: but with such a strange expression in his eyes! I never could quite make it out, whether it was love or hate. Certainly, after she came his manner changed towards me. I was not jealous. I did not suspect this change from any small feeling of wounded self-love, or from any envy of my sister; but I saw it—I felt it in my heart—yet without connecting it with Ellen in any way. I knew that he no longer loved me as he used to do, but I did not think he loved her; at least not with the same kind of love. I used to be surprised at Ellen's conduct to him. She was more than cold; she was passionately rude and unkind; not so much when I was there as when I was away. For I used to hear her voice speaking in those deep indignant tones that are worse to bear than the hardest scream of passion; and sometimes I used to hear hard words—he speaking at the first soft and pleadingly, often to end in a terrible burst of anger and imprecation. I could not understand why they quarrelled. There was a mystery between them I did not know of; and I did not like to ask them, for I was afraid of them both—as much afraid of Ellen as my husband—and I felt like a reed between them—as if I should have been crushed be-

neath any storm I might chance to wake up. So, I was silent—suffering alone, and bearing a cheerful face so far as I could.

Ellen wanted me to return home with her. Soon after she came, and soon after I heard the first dispute between them, she urged me to go back to Hurst Farm; at once, and for a long time. Weak as I am by nature, it has always been a marvel to me since, how strong I was where my love for my husband was concerned. It seemed impossible for me to yield to any pressure against him. I believe now that a very angel could not have turned me from him!

At last she said to me in a low voice: "Mary, this is madness!—it is almost sinful! Can you not see—can you not hear?" And then she stopped, and would say no more, though I urged her to tell me what she meant. For this terrible mystery begun to weigh on me painfully, and, for all that I trembled so much to fathom it, I had begun to feel that any truth would be better than such a life of dread. I seemed to be living among shadows; my very husband and sister not real, for their real lives were hidden from me. But I was too timid to insist on an explanation, and so things went on in their old way.

In one respect only, changing still more painfully, still more markedly; in my husband's conduct to me. He was like another creature altogether to me now, he was so altered. He seldom spoke to me at all, and he never spoke kindly. All that I did annoyed him, all that I said irritated him; and once (the little widow covered her face with her hands and shuddered) he spurned me with his foot and cursed me, one night in our own room, when I knelt weeping before him, supplicating him for pity's sake to tell me how I had offended him. But I said to myself that he was tired, annoyed, and that it was irritating to see a loving woman's tears; and so I excused him, as oftentimes before, and went on loving him all the same—God forgive me for my idolatry!

Things had been very bad of late between Ellen and my husband. But the character of their discord was changed. Instead of reproaching, they watched each other incessantly. They put me in mind of fencers—my husband on the defensive.

"Mary," said my sister to me suddenly, coming to the sofa where I was sitting embroidering my poor baby's cap. "What does your Harry do in life? What is his profession?"

She fixed her eyes on me earnestly.

"I do not know, darling," I answered, vaguely. "He has no profession that I know of."

"But what fortune has he, then? Did he not tell you what his income was, and how obtained, when he married? To us, he said only that he had so much a year—a thou-



sand a year; and he would say no more. But, has he not been more explicit with you?"

"No," I answered, considering; for, indeed, I had never thought of this. I had trusted so blindly to him in everything that it would have seemed to me a profound insult to have even asked of his affairs. "No, he never told me anything about his fortune, Ellen. He gives me money when I want it, and is always generous. He seems to have plenty; whenever it is asked for, he has it by him, and gives me even more than I require."

Still her eyes kept looking at me in that strange manner. "And this is all you know?"

"Yes—all. What more should I wish to know? Is he not the husband, and has he not absolute right over everything! I have no business to interfere." The words sound harsher now than they did then, for I spoke lovingly.

Ellen touched the little cap I held. "Does not this make you anxious?" she said. "Can you not fear as a mother, even while you love as a wife?"

"Fear darling! Why? What should I fear, or whom? What is there, Ellen, on your heart?" I then added passionately. "Tell me at once; for I know that you have some terrible secret concealed from me; and I would rather know anything—whatever it may be—than live on, longer, in this kind of suspense and anguish! It is too much for me to bear, Ellen."

She took my hands. "Have you strength?" she said, earnestly. "Could you really bear the truth?" Then seeing my distress, for I had fallen into a kind of hysterical fit—I was very delicate then—she shook her head in despair, and letting my hands fall heavily on my lap, said in undertone, "No, no! she is too weak—too childish!" Then she went up stairs abruptly; and I heard her walking about her own room for nearly an hour after, in long steady steps.

I have often thought that, had she told me then, and taken me to her heart—her strong, brave, noble heart—I could have derived courage from it, and could have borne the dreadful truth I was forced to know afterwards. But the strong are so impatient with us! They leave us too soon—their own strength revolts at our weakness; so we are often left, broken in this weakness, for want of a little patience and sympathy.

Harry came in, a short time after Ellen had left me. "What has she been saying?" he cried, passionately. His eyes were wild and bloodshot; his beautiful black hair flung all in disorder about his face.

"Dear Harry, she has said nothing about you," I answered, trembling. "She only asked what was your profession, and how much we had a year. That was all."

"Why did she ask this? What business was it of hers?" cried Harry, fiercely. "Tell me;" and he shook me roughly; "what did you answer her, little fool?"

"Oh, nothing;" and I began to cry: it was because he frightened me. "I said, what is true, that I knew nothing of your affairs, as indeed what concern is that of mine? I could say nothing more, Harry."

"Better that than too much," he muttered; and then he flung me harshly back on the sofa, saying, "Tears and folly and weakness! The same round—always the same! Why did I marry a mere pretty doll—a plaything—no wife!"

And then he seemed to think he had said too much; for he came to me and kissed me, and said that he loved me. But, for the first time in our married life his kisses did not soothe me, nor did I believe his assurances.

All that night I heard Ellen walk steadily and unresting through her room. She never slackened her pace, she never stopped, she never hurried; but, the same slow measured tread went on; the firm foot, yet light, falling as if to music, her very step the same mixture of manliness and womanhood as her character.

After this burst of passion Harry's tenderness to me became unbounded; as if he wished to make up to me for some wrong. I need not say how soon I forgave him, nor how much I loved him again. All my love came back in one full boundless tide; and the current of my being set towards him again as before. If he had asked me for my life then, as his mere fancy, to destroy, I would have given it to him. I would have lain down and died, if he had wished to see the flowers grow over my grave.

My husband and Ellen grew more estranged as his affection seemed to return to me. His manner to her was defying; hers to him contemptuous. I heard her call him villain once, in the garden below the windows; at which he laughed—his wicked laugh, and said "tell her, and see if she will believe you!"

I was sitting in the window, working. It was a cold damp day in the late autumn, when those chill fogs of November are just beginning; those fogs with the frost in them, that steal into one's very heart. It was a day when a visible blight is in the air, when death is abroad everywhere, and suffering and crime. I was alone in the drawing-room. Ellen was up stairs, and my husband, as I believed, in the City. But I have remembered since, that I heard the hall-door softly opened, and a footstep steal quietly by the drawing room up the stairs. The evening was just beginning to close in—dull, gray, and ghostlike; the dying daylight melting into the long shadows that stalked like wandering ghosts about the fresh made grave of nature. I sat working still, at some

of those small garments about which I dreamed such fond dreams, and wove such large hopes of happiness; and as I sat, while the evening fell heavy about me, a mysterious shadow of evil passed over me, a dread presentiment, a consciousness of ill, that made me tremble, as if in ague—angry at myself though for my folly. But, it was reality. It was no hysterical sinking of the spirits that I felt; no mere nervousness or cowardice; it was something I had never known before; a knowledge, a presence, a power, a warning word, a spirit's cry, that had swept by me as the fearful evil marched on to its conclusion.

I heard a faint scream up stairs. It was so faint I could scarcely distinguish it from a sudden rush of wind through an opening door, or the chirp of a mouse behind the wainscot. Presently, I heard the same sound again; and then a dull muffled noise overhead, as of some one walking heavily, or dragging a heavy weight across the floor. I sat petrified by fear. A nameless agony was upon me that deprived me of all power of action. I thought of Harry and I thought of Ellen, in an inextricable cypher of misery and agony; but I could not have defined a line in my own mind; I could not have explained what it was I feared. I only knew that it was sorrow that was to come and sin. I listened, but all was still again; once only, I thought I heard a low moan, and once a muttering voice—which I know now to have been my husband's, speaking passionately to himself.

And then his voice swept stormfully through the house, crying wildly, "Mary, Mary! Quick here! Your sister! Ellen!"

I ran up stairs. It seems to me now, that I almost flew. I found Ellen lying on the floor of her own room, just inside the door; her feet towards the door of my husband's study, which was immediately opposite her room. She was fainting; at least I thought so then. We raised her up between us; my husband trembling more than I; and I unfastened her gown, and threw water on her face, and pushed back her hair, but she did not revive. I told Harry to go for a doctor. A horrid thought was stealing over me; but he lingered, as I fancied, unaccountably and cruelly, though I twice asked him to go. Then, I thought that perhaps he was too much overcome; so I went to him, and kissed him, and said, "She will soon be better, Harry," cheerfully, to cheer him. But I felt in my heart that she was no more.

At last, after many urgent entreaties, and after the servants had come up, clustering in a frightened way round the bed—but he sent them away again immediately—he put on his hat, and went out, soon returning with a strange man; not our own doctor. This man was rude and coarse, and ordered

me aside, as I stood bathing my sister's face, and pulled her arm and hand roughly, to see how dead they fell, and stooped down to her lips—I thought he touched them even—all in a violent and insolent way, that shocked me and bewildered me. My husband stood in the shadow, ghastly pale, but not interfering.

It was too true, what the strange man had said so coarsely. She was dead. Yes; the creature that an hour ago had been so full of life, so beautiful, so resolute, so young, was now a stiffening corpse, inanimate and dead, without life and without hope. Oh! that word had set my brain on fire? Dead! here, in my house, under my roof—dead so mysteriously, so strangely—why? How? It was a fearful dream, it was no truth that lay there. I was in a nightmare; I was not sane; and thinking how ghastly it all was, I fainted softly on the bed, no one knowing, till some time after, that I had fallen, and was not praying. When I recovered I was in my own room, alone. Crawling feebly to my sister's door, I found that she had been washed and dressed, and was now laid out on her bed. It struck me that all had been done in strange haste: Harry telling me the servants had done it while I fainted. I knew afterwards that he had told them that it was I, and that I would have no help. The mystery of it all was soon to be unravelled.

One thing I was decided on—to watch by my sister this night. It was in vain that my husband opposed me; in vain that he coaxed me by his caresses, or tried to terrify me with angry threats. Something of my sister's nature seemed to have passed into me; and unless he had positively prevented me by force, no other means would have had any effect. He gave way to me at last—angrily—and the night came on and found me sitting by the bedside watching my dear sister.

How beautiful she looked! Her face, still with the gentle mark of sorrow on it that it had in life, looked so grand! She was so great, so pure; she was like a goddess sleeping; she was not like a mere woman of this earth. She did not seem to be dead; there was life about her yet, for there was still the look of power and of human sympathy that she used to have when alive. The soul was there still, and love and knowledge.

By degrees a strange feeling of her living presence in the room came over me. Alone in the still midnight, with no sound, no person near me, it seemed as if I had leisure and power to pass into the world beyond the grave. I felt my sister near me; I felt the passing of her life about me, as when one sleeps, but still is conscious that another life is weaving in with ours. It seemed as if her breath fell warm on my face; as if her shadowy arms held me in their clasp; as if her eyes were looking



through the darkness at me; as if I held her hands in mine, and her long hair floated round my forehead. And then to shake off these fancies, and convince myself that she was really dead, I looked again and again at her lying there; a marble corpse, ice-cold, with the lips set and rigid, and the death band beneath her chin. There she was, stiff in her white shroud, the snowy linen pressing so lightly on her; no life within, no warmth about her, and all my fancies were vain dreams. Then I buried my face in my hands, and wept as if my heart was breaking. And when I turned away my eyes from her, the presence came around me again. So long as I watched her it was not there: I saw the corpse only; but when I shut this out from me, then it seemed as if a barrier had been removed, and that my sister floated near me again.

I had been praying, sitting thus in these alternate feelings of her spiritual presence and her bodily death, when, raising my head and looking towards the farther corner of the room, I saw, standing at some little distance, my sister Ellen. I saw her distinctly, as distinctly as you may see that red fire blaze. Sadly and lovingly her dark eyes looked at me, sadly her gentle lips smiled, and by look and gesture too she showed me that she wished to speak to me. Strange, I was not frightened. It was so natural to see her there, that for the moment I forgot that she was dead.

"Ellen," I said, "what is it?"

The figure smiled. It came nearer. Oh! do not say it was fancy! I saw it advance; it came glidingly! I remembered afterwards that it did not walk—but it came forward—to the light, and stood not ten paces from me. It looked at me still, in the same sad gentle way, and somehow—I do not know whether with the hand or by the turning of the head—it showed me the throat, where were the distinct marks of two powerful hands. And then it pointed to its heart; and looking, I saw the broad stain of blood above it. And then I heard her voice—I swear I was not mad—I heard it, I say to you distinctly—whisper softly, "Mary!" and then it said, still more audibly, "Murdered!"

And then the figure vanished, and suddenly the whole room was vacant. That one dread word had sounded as if forced out by the pressure of some strong agony—like a man revealing his life's secret when dying. And when it had been spoken, or rather wailed forth, there was a sudden sweep and chilly rush through the air; and the life, the soul, the presence fled. I was alone again with Death. The mission had been fulfilled; the warning had been given; and then my sister passed away,—for her work with earth was done.

Brave and calm as the strongest man that ever fought on a battle field, I stood up beside

my sister's body. I unfastened her last dress, and threw it back from her chest and shoulders; I raised her head and took off the bandage from round her face; and then I saw deep black bruises on her throat, the marks of hands that had grappled her from behind, and that had strangled her. And then I looked further, and I saw a small wound below the left breast, about which hung two or three clots of blood, that had oozed up, despite all care and knowledge in her manner of murder. I knew then she had first been suffocated, to prevent her screams, and then stabbed where the wound would bleed inwardly, and show no sign to the mere bystander.

I covered her up carefully again. I laid the pillow smooth and straight, and laid the heavy head gently down. I drew the shroud close above the dreadful mark of murder. And then—still as calm and resolute as I had been ever since the revelation had come to me—I left the room, and passed into my husband's study. It was on me to discover all the truth.

His writing-table was locked. Where my strength came from, I know not; but, with a chisel that was lying on the table, I pried the drawer and broke the lock. I opened it. There was a long and slender dagger lying there, red with blood; a handful of woman's hair rudely severed from the head, lay near it. It was my sister's hair!—that wavy silken uncurled auburn hair that I had always loved and admired so much! And near to these again, were stamps and dies, and moulds, and plates, and handwritings with facsimiles beneath, and banker's cheques, and a heap of leaden coin, and piles of incomplete bank-notes; and all the evidences of a coiner's and a forger's trade,—the suspicion of which had caused those bitter quarrellings between poor Ellen and my husband—the knowledge of which had caused her death.

With these things I saw also a letter addressed to Ellen in my husband's handwriting. It was an unfinished letter, as if it had displeased him, and he had made another copy. It began with these words—no fear that I should forget them; they are burnt into my brain—"I never really loved her, Ellen; she pleased me, only as a doll would please a child; and I married her from pity, not from love. You, Ellen, you alone could fill my heart; you alone are my fit helpmate. Fly with me Ellen.—" Here, the letter was left unfinished; but it gave me enough to explain all the meaning of the first weeks of my sister's stay here, and why she had called him villain, and why he had told her that she might tell me, and that I would not believe.

I saw it all now. I turned my head, to see my husband standing a few paces behind me. Good Heaven! I have often thought,

was that man the same man I had loved so long and fondly?

The strength of horror, not of courage, upheld me. I know he meant to kill me, but that did not alarm me; I only dreaded lest his hand should touch me. It was not death, it was he I shrank from. I believe if he had touched me then, I should have fallen dead at his feet. I stretched out my arms in horror, to thrust him back, uttering a piercing shriek; and while he made an effort to seize me, overreaching himself in the madness of his fury, I rushed by him, shrieking still, and so fled away into the darkness, where I lived, oh! for many many months!

When I woke again, I found that my poor baby had died, and that my husband had gone none knew where. But the fear of his return haunted me. I could get no rest day or night for dread of him; and I felt going mad with the one hard thought for ever pitilessly pursuing me—that I should fall again into his hands. I put on widow's weeds—for indeed am I too truly widowed!—and then I began wandering about; wandering in poverty and privation, expecting every moment to meet him face to face; wandering about, so that I may escape the more easily when the moment does come.

## THE SEVENTH POOR TRAVELLER.

WE were all yet looking at the Widow, after her frightened voice had died away, when the Book-Pedlar, apparently afraid of being forgotten, asked what did we think of his giving us a Legend to wind up with? We all said (except the Lawyer, who wanted a description of the murderer to send to the Police Hue and Cry, and who was with great difficulty nudged to silence by the united efforts of the company) that we thought we should like it. So, the Book-Pedlar started off at score, thus:

GIRT round with rugged mountains  
The fair Lake Constance lies!  
In her blue heart reflected,  
Shine back the starry skies;  
And watching each white cloudlet  
Float silently and slow,  
You think a piece of heaven  
Lies on our earth below!

Midnight is there: and silence  
Enthroned in Heaven, looks down  
Upon her own calm mirror,  
Upon a sleeping town:  
For Bregenz, that quaint city  
Upon the Tyrol shore,  
Has stood upon Lake Constance,  
A thousand years and more.

Her battlements and towers,  
Upon their rocky steep,  
Have cast their trembling shadow  
For ages on the deep:  
Mountain, and lake, and valley,  
A sacred legend know,  
Of how the town was saved one night,  
Three hundred years ago.

Far from her home and kindred,  
A Tyrol maid had fled,

To serve in the Swiss valleys,  
And toil for daily bread;  
And every year that fled  
So silently and fast,  
Seemed to bear farther from her  
The memory of the Past.

She served kind, gentle masters,  
Nor asked for rest or change;  
Her friends seemed no more new ones,  
Their speech seemed no more strange;  
And when she led her cattle  
To pasture every day,  
She ceased to look and wonder  
On which side Bregenz lay

She spoke no more of Bregenz,  
With longing and with tears;  
Her Tyrol home seemed faded  
In a deep mist of years,  
She needed not the rumors  
Of Austrian war and strife;  
Each day she rose contented,  
To the calm toils of life.

Yet when her master's children  
Would clustering round her stand,  
She sang them the old ballads  
Of her own native land;  
And when at morn and evening  
She knelt before God's throne,  
The accents of her childhood  
Rose to her lips alone

And so she dwelt; the valley  
More peaceful year by year;  
Yet suddenly strange portents,  
Of some great deed seemed near.  
The golden corn was bending  
Upon its fragile stalk,  
While farmers, heedless of their fields,  
Paced up and down in talk.

The men seemed stern and altered,  
 With looks cast on the ground ;  
 With anxious faces, one by one,  
 The women gathered round ;  
 All talk of flax, or spinning,  
 Or work, was put away ;  
 The very children seemed afraid  
 To go alone to play.

One day, out in the meadow,  
 With strangers from the town,  
 Some secret plan discussing.  
 The men walked up and down.  
 Yet, now and then seemed watching,  
 A strange uncertain gleam,  
 That looked like lances 'mid the trees,  
 That stood below the stream.

At eve they all assembled,  
 All care and doubt were fled ;  
 With jovial laugh they feasted,  
 The board was nobly spread,  
 The elder of the village  
 Rose up, his glass in hand,  
 And cried, " We drink the downfall  
 " Of an accursed land !

" The night is growing darker,  
 " Ere one more day is flown,  
 " Bregenz, our foemen's stronghold  
 " Bregenz shall be our own !"  
 The women shrank in terror  
 (Yet Pride, too, had her part),  
 But one poor Tyrol maiden  
 Felt death within her heart

Before her, stood fair Bregenz,  
 Once more her towers arose ;  
 What were the friends beside her ?  
 Only her country's foes !  
 The faces of her kinsfolk,  
 The days of childhood flown,  
 The echoes of her mountains,  
 Reclaimed her as their own !

Nothing she heard around her,  
 (Though shouts rang forth again)  
 Gone were the green Swiss valleys,  
 The pasture, and the plain ;  
 Before her eyes one vision,  
 And in her heart one cry,  
 That said, " Go forth, save Bregenz,  
 And then, if need be, die !"

With trembling haste and breathless,  
 With noiseless step, she sped ;  
 Horses and weary cattle  
 Were standing in the shed,  
 She loosed the strong white charger,  
 That fed from out her hand ;  
 She mounted, and she turned his head  
 Towards her native land.

Out—out into the darkness—  
 Faster, and still more fast ;  
 The smooth grass flies behind her,  
 The chestnut wood is past ;

She looks up ; clouds are heavy ;  
 Why is her steed so slow ?  
 Scarcely the wind beside them,  
 Can pass them as they go.

" Faster !" she cries, " O faster !"  
 Eleven the church-bells chime ;  
 " O God," she cries, " help Bregenz,  
 And bring me there in time !"  
 But louder than bells' ringing,  
 Or lowing of the kine,  
 Grows nearer in the midnight  
 The rushing of the Rhine.

She strives to pierce the blackness,  
 And looser throws the rein ;  
 Her steed must breast the waters  
 That dash above his mane.  
 How gallantly, how nobly,  
 He struggles through the foam  
 And see—in the far distance,  
 Shine out the lights of home !

Shall not the roaring waters  
 Their headlong gallop check ?  
 The steed draws back in terror,  
 She leans above his neck  
 To watch the flowing darkness,  
 The bank is high and steep,  
 One pause—he staggers forward,  
 And plunges in the deep.

Up the steep bank he bears her,  
 And now, they rush again  
 Towards the heights of Bregenz,  
 That tower above the plain.  
 They reach the gate of Bregenz,  
 Just as the midnight rings,  
 And out come serf and soldier  
 To meet the news she brings.

Bregenz is saved ! Ere daylight  
 Her battlements are manned ;  
 Defiance greets the army  
 That marches on the land,  
 And if to deeds heroic  
 Should endless fame be paid.  
 Bregenz does well to honor  
 The noble Tyrol maid.

Three hundred years are vanished,  
 And yet upon the hill  
 An old stone gateway rises,  
 To do her honor still.  
 And there, when Bregenz women  
 Sit spinning in the shade,  
 They see in quaint old carving  
 The charger and the Maid.

And when, to guard old Bregenz,  
 By gateway, street, and tower,  
 The warder paces all night long,  
 And calls each passing hour ;  
 " Nine," " ten," " eleven," he cries aloud,  
 And then (O crown of Fame !)  
 When midnight pauses in the skies,  
 He calls the maiden's name !



## THE ROAD.

THE stories being all finished, and the Wassail too, we broke up as the Cathedral-bell struck Twelve. I did not take leave of my Travellers that night; for, it had come into my head to reappear in conjunction with some hot coffee, at seven in the morning.

As I passed along the High Street, I heard the Waits at a distance, and struck off to find them. They were playing near one of the old gates of the city, at the corner of a wonderfully quaint row of red-brick tenements, which the clarionet obligingly informed me were inhabited by the Minor-Canons. They had odd little porches over the doors, like sounding-boards over old pulpits; and I thought I should like to see one of the Minor-Canons come out upon his top step, and favor us with a little Christmas discourse about the poor scholars of Rochester; taking for his text the words of his Master, relative to the devouring of Widows' houses.

The clarionet was so communicative, and my inclinations were (as they generally are), of so vagabond a tendency, that I accompanied the Waits across an open green called the Vines, and assisted—in the French sense—at the performance of two waltzes, two polkas, and three Irish melodies, before I thought of my inn any more. However, I returned to it then, and found a fiddle in the kitchen, and Ben, the wall-eyed young man, and two chambermaids, circling round the great deal table with the utmost animation.

I had a very bad night. It cannot have been owing to the turkey, or the beef—and the Wassail is out of the question—but, in every endeavor that I made to get to sleep, I failed most dismally. Now, I was at Badajos with a fiddle; now, haunted by the widow's murdered sister. Now, I was riding on a little blind girl to save my native town from sack and ruin. Now, I was expostulating with the dead mother of the unconscious little sailor-boy; now, dealing in diamonds in Sky Fair; now, for life or death hiding mince-pies under bed-room carpets. For all this, I was never asleep; and, in whatsoever unreasonable direction my mind rambled, the effigy of Master Richard Watts perpetually embarrassed it.

In a word, I only got out of the worshipful Master Richard Watts's way, by getting out of bed in the dark at six o'clock, and tumbling, as my custom is, into all the cold water that could be accumulated for the

purpose. The outer air was dull and cold enough in the street, when I came down there; and the one candle in our supper-room at Watts's Charity looked as pale in the burning, as if it had had a bad night too. But, my Travellers had all slept soundly, and they took to the hot coffee, and the piles of bread and butter which Ben had arranged like deals in a timber-yard, as kindly as I could desire.

While it was yet scarcely daylight, we all came out into the street together, and there shook hands. The widow took the little sailor towards Chatham, where he was to find a steamboat for Sheerness; the lawyer, with an extremely knowing look, went his own way, without committing himself by announcing his intentions; two more struck off by the cathedral and old castle for Maidstone; and the book-pedlar accompanied me over the bridge. As for me, I was going to walk, by Cobham Woods, as far upon my way to London as I fancied.

When I came to the stile and footpath by which I was to diverge from the main-road, I bade farewell to my last remaining Poor Traveller, and pursued my way alone. And now, the mist began to rise in the most beautiful manner, and the sun to shine; and as I went on through the bracing air, seeing the hoar frost sparkle everywhere, I felt as if all Nature shared in the joy of the great Birthday.

Going through the woods, the softness of my tread upon the mossy ground and among the brown leaves, enhanced the Christmas sacredness by which I felt surrounded. As the whitened stems environed me, I thought how the Founder of the time had never raised his benignant hand, save to bless and heal, except in the case of one unconscious tree. By Cobham Hall, I came to the village, and the churchyard where the dead had been quietly buried, "in the sure and certain hope" which Christmas time inspired. What children could I see at play, and not be loving of, recalling who had loved them! No garden that I passed, was out of unison with the day, for I remembered that the tomb was in a garden, and that "she supposing him to be the gardener," had said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." In time, the distant river with the ships, came full in view, and with it pictures of the poor fishermen mending their nets, who arose and followed him



—of the teaching of the people from a ship pushed off a little way from shore, by reason of the multitude—of a majestic figure walking on the water, in the loneliness of night. My very shadow on the ground was eloquent of Christmas; for, did not the people lay their sick where the mere shadows of the men who had heard and seen him, might fall as they passed along?

Thus, Christmas begirt me, far and near, until I had come to Blackheath, and had walked down the long vista of gnarled old

trees in Greenwich Park, and was being steam-rattled, through the mists now closing in once more, towards the lights of London. Brightly they shone, but not so brightly as my own fire and the brighter faces around it, when we came together to celebrate the day. And there I told of worthy Master Richard Watts, and of my supper with the Six Poor Travellers who were neither Rogues nor Proctors, and from that hour to this, I have never seen one of them again.



## NINE

### NEW STORIES BY THE CHRISTMAS FIRE.

#### THE SCHOOLBOY'S STORY.

BEING rather young at present—I am getting on in years, but still I am rather young—I have no particular adventures of my own to fall back upon. It wouldn't much interest anybody here, I suppose, to know what a screw the Reverend is, or what a griffin *she* is, or how they do stick it into parents—particularly hair-cutting and medical attendance. One of our fellows was charged in his half's account twelve and six-pence for two pills—tolerably profitable at six and threepence a-piece, I should think—and he never took them either, but put them up the sleeve of his jacket.

As to the beef, it's shameful. It's *not* beef. Regular beef is't veins. You can chew regular beef. Besides which, there's gravy to regular beef, and you never see a drop to ours. Another of our fellows went home ill, and heard the family doctor tell his father that he couldn't account for his complaint unless it was the beer. Of course it was the beer, and well it might be!

However, beef and Old Cheeseman are two different things. So is beer. It was Old Cheeseman I meant to tell about; not the manner in which our fellows get their constitutions destroyed for the sake of profit.

Why, look at the pie-crust alone. There's no flakiness in it. It's solid—like damp lead. Then our fellows get nightmares, and are bolstered for calling out and waking other fellows. Who can wonder!

Old Cheeseman one night waked in his sleep, put his hat on over his night-cap, got hold of a fishing-rod and a cricket-bat, and went down into the parlor, where they naturally thought from his appearance he was a Ghost. Why, he never would have done that, if his meals had been wholesome. When we all begin to walk in our sleeps, I suppose they'll be sorry for it.

Old Cheeseman wasn't second Latin Master then; he was a fellow himself. He was first brought there, very small, in a post-chaise, by a woman who was always taking snuff and shaking him—and that was the

most he remembered about it. He never went home for the holidays. His accounts (he never learnt any extras) were sent to a Bank, and the Bank paid them; and he had a brown suit twice a year, and went into boots at twelve. They were always too big for him, too.

In the Midsummer holidays, some of our fellows who lived within walking distance, used to come back and climb the trees outside the playground wall, on purpose to look at Old Cheeseman reading there by himself. He was always as mild as the tea—and *that's* pretty mild, I should hope!—so when they whistled to him, he looked up and nodded; and when they said "Halloa Old Cheeseman, what have you had for dinner?" he said "Boiled mutton;" and when they said "An't it solitary, Old Cheeseman?" he said "It is a little dull sometimes;" and then they said "Well, good bye, Old Cheeseman!" and climbed down again. Of course it was imposing on Old Cheeseman to give him nothing but boiled mutton through a whole Vacation, but that was just like the system. When they didn't give him boiled mutton they gave him rice pudding, pretending it was a treat. And saved the butcher.

So Old Cheeseman went on. The holidays brought him into other trouble besides the loneliness; because when the fellows began to come back, not wanting to, he was always glad to see them: which was aggravating when they were not at all glad to see him, and so he got his head knocked against walls, and that was the way his nose bled. But he was a favorite in general. Once, a subscription was raised for him; and, to keep up his spirits, he was presented before the holidays with two white mice, a rabbit, a pigeon, and a beautiful puppy. Old Cheeseman cried about it, especially soon afterwards, when they all ate one another.

Of course Old Cheeseman used to be called by the names of all sorts of cheeses, Double Glo'sterman, Family Cheshireman, Dutchman, North Wiltshireman, and all *that*

But he never minded it. And I don't mean to say he was old in point of years, because he wasn't, only he was called, from the first, Old Cheeseman.

At last, Old Cheeseman was made second Latin Master. He was brought in one morning at the beginning of a new half, and presented to the school in that capacity as "Mr. Cheeseman." Then our fellows all agreed that Old Cheeseman was a spy, and a deserter, who had gone over to the enemy's camp, and sold himself for gold. It was no excuse for him that he had sold himself for very little gold—two pound ten a quarter, and his washing, as was reported. It was decided by a Parliament which sat about it, that Old Cheeseman's mercenary motives could alone be taken into account, and that he had "coined our blood for drachmas." The Parliament took the expression out of the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius.

When it was settled in this strong way that Old Cheeseman was a tremendous traitor, who had wormed himself into our fellows' secrets on purpose to get himself into favor by giving up everything he knew, all courageous fellows were invited to come forward and enrol themselves in a Society for making a set against him. The President of the Society was First boy, named Bob Tarter. His father was in the West Indies, and he owned, himself, that his father was worth millions. He had great power among our fellows, and he wrote a parody, beginning,

"Who made believe to be so meek  
That we could hardly hear him speak,  
Yet turned out an Informing Sneak?  
Old Cheeseman."

—and on in that way through more than a dozen verses, which he used to go and sing, every morning, close by the new master's desk. He trained one of the low boys too, a rosy cheeked little Brass who didn't care what he did, to go up to him with his Latin Grammar one morning, and say it so:—*Nominatirus pronominum*—Old Cheeseman, *raro exprimitur*—was never suspected, *nisi distinctionis*—of being an informer, *au emphasis gratia*—until he proved one. *Ut*—for instance, *Vos damnastis*—when he sold the boys, *Quasi*—as though, *dicat*—he should say, *Preterea nemo*—I'm a Judas! All this produced a great effect on Old Cheeseman. He had never had much hair; but what he had, began to get thinner and thinner every day. He grew paler and more worn; and sometimes of an evening he was seen sitting at his desk with a precious long snuff to his candle, and his hands before his face, crying. But no member of the Society could pity him, even if he felt inclined, because, the President said it was Old Cheeseman's conscience.

So Old Cheeseman went on, and didn't he

lead a miserable life! Of course the Reverend turned up his nose at him, and of course *she* did—because both of them always do at all the masters, but he suffered from the fellows most, and he suffered from them constantly. He never told about it, that the society could find out; but he got no credit for that, because the President said it was Old Cheeseman's cowardice.

He had only one friend in the world, and that one was almost as powerless as he was, for it was only Jane. Jane was a sort of wardrobe-woman to our fellows, and took care of the boxes. She came, at first, I believe, as a kind of apprentice, some of our fellows say from a Charity, but I don't know, and after her time was out, had stopped at so much a year. So little a year, perhaps I ought to say, for it is far more likely. However, she had put some pounds in the Savings Bank, and she was a very nice young woman. She was not quite pretty; but she had a very frank, honest, bright face, and all our fellows were fond of her. She was uncommonly neat and cheerful, and uncommonly comfortable and kind. And if anything was the matter with a fellow's mother, he always went and showed the letter to Jane.

Jane was Old Cheeseman's friend. The more the Society went against him, the more she stood by him. She used to give him a good-humored look out of her still-room window, sometimes, that seemed to set him up for the day. She used to pass out of the orchard and the kitchen-garden (always kept locked, I believe you!) through the play-ground, when she might have gone the other way, only to give a turn of her head, as much as to say, "Keep up your spirits!" to Old Cheeseman. His slip of a room was so fresh and orderly, that it was well known who looked after it while he was at his desk; and when our fellows saw a smoking hot dumpling on his plate at dinner, they knew with indignation who had sent it up.

Under these circumstances, the Society resolved, after a quantity of meeting and debating, that Jane should be requested to cut Old Cheeseman dead; and that if she refused, she must be sent to Coventry herself. So a deputation, headed by the President, was appointed to wait on Jane, and inform her of the vote the Society had been under the painful necessity of passing. She was very much respected for all her good qualities, and there was a story of her having once waylaid the Reverend in his own study, and got a fellow off from severe punishment, of her own kind comfortable heart. So the deputation didn't much like the job. However, they went up, and the President told Jane all about it. Upon which Jane turned very red, burst into tears, informed the President and deputation, in a way not



at all like her usual way, that they were a parcel of malicious young savages, and turned the whole respected body out of the room. Consequently, it was entered in the Society's book (kept in astronomical cypher, for fear of detection), that all communication with Jane was interdicted; and the President addressed the members on this convincing instance of Old Cheeseman's undermining.

But Jane was true to Old Cheeseman as Old Cheeseman was false to our fellows—in their opinion at all events—and steadily continued to be his only friend. It was a great exasperation to the Society, because Jane was as much a loss to them as she was a gain to him; and being more inveterate against him than ever, they treated him worse than ever. At last, one morning, his desk stood empty, his room was peeped into and found to be vacant, and a whisper went about among the pale faces of our fellows that Old Cheeseman, unable to bear it any longer, had got up early and drowned himself.

The mysterious looks of the other masters after breakfast, and the evident fact that Old Cheeseman was not expected, confirmed the Society in this opinion. Some began to discuss whether the President was liable to hanging or only transportation for life, and the President's face showed a great anxiety to know which. However, he said that a jury of his countrymen should find him game; and that in his address he should put it to them to lay their hands upon their hearts, and say whether they, as Britons, approved of Informers, and how they thought they would like it themselves. Some of the Society considered that he had better run away until he found a Forest, where he might change clothes with a woodcutter, and stain his face with blackberries; but the majority believed that if he stood his ground, his father—belonging, as he did, to the West Indies, and being worth millions—could buy him off.

All our fellows' hearts beat fast when the Reverend came in, and made a sort of a Roman, or a Field Marshal, of himself with the ruler; as he always did before delivering an address. But their fears were nothing to their astonishment when he came out with the story that Old Cheeseman, "so long our respected friend and fellow-pilgrim in the pleasant plains of knowledge," he called him—O yes! I dare say! Much of that!—was the orphan child of a disinherited young lady who had married against her father's wish, and whose young husband had died, and who had died of sorrow herself, and whose unfortunate baby (Old Cheeseman) had been brought up at the cost of a grand-father who would never consent to see it, baby, boy, or man: which grandfather was now dead, and serve him right—that's *my* putting in—and which grandfather's large

property, there being no will, was now, and all of a sudden and for ever, Old Cheeseman's! Our so long respected friend and fellow-pilgrim in the pleasant plains of knowledge, the Reverend wound up a lot of bothering quotations by saying, would "come among us once more" that day fortnight, when he desired to take leave of us himself in a more particular manner. With these words, he stared severely round at our fellows, and went solemnly out.

There was precious consternation among the members of the Society now. Lots of them wanted to resign, and lots more began to try to make out that they had never belonged to it. However, the President stuck up, and said that they must stand or fall together, and that if a breach was made it should be over his body—which was meant to encourage the Society: but it didn't. The President further said, he would consider the position in which they stood, and would give them his best opinion and advice in a few days. This was eagerly looked for, as he knew a good deal of the world on account of his father's being in the West Indies.

After days and days of hard thinking, and drawing armies all over his slate, the President called our fellows together, and made the matter clear. He said it was plain that when Old Cheeseman came on the appointed day, his first revenge would be to impeach the Society, and have it flogged all round. After witnessing with joy the torture of his enemies, and gloating over the cries which agony would extort from them, the probability was that he would invite the Reverend, on pretence of conversation, into a private room—say the parlor into which parents were shown, where the two great globes were which were never used—and would there reproach him with the various frauds and oppressions he had endured at his hands. At the close of his observations, he would make a signal to a Prize-fighter concealed in the passage, who would then appear and pitch into the Reverend till he was left insensible. Old Cheeseman would then make Jane a present of from five to ten pounds, and would leave the establishment in fiendish triumph.

The President explained that against the parlor part, or the Jane part, of these arrangements he had nothing to say; but, on the part of the Society, he counselled deadly resistance. With this view he recommended that all available desks should be filled with stones, and that the first word of the complaint should be the signal to every fellow to let fly at Old Cheeseman. The bold advice put the Society in better spirits, and was unanimously taken. A post about Old Cheeseman's size was put up in the playground, and all our fellows practised at it till it was dented all over.

When the day came, and places were called, every fellow sat down in a tremble. There had been much discussing and disputing as to how Old Cheeseman would come; but it was the general opinion that he would appear in a sort of a triumphal car drawn by four horses, with two livery servants in front, and the Prize-fighter in disguise up behind. So all our fellows sat listening for the sound of wheels. But no wheels were heard, for Old Cheeseman walked after all, and came into the school without any preparation. Pretty much as he used to be, only dressed in black.

"Gentlemen," said the Reverend, presenting him, "our so long respected friend and fellow-pilgrim in the pleasant plains of knowledge, is desirous to offer a word or two. Attention, gentlemen, one and all!"

Every fellow stole his hand into his desk, and looked at the President. The President was all ready, and taking aim at Old Cheeseman with his eyes.

What did Old Cheeseman then, but walk up to his old desk, look round him with a queer smile as if there was a tear in his eye, and began in a quavering mild voice, "My dear companions and old friends!"

Every fellow's hand came out of his desk, and the President suddenly began to cry.

"My dear companions and old friends," said Old Cheeseman, "you have heard of my good fortune. I have passed so many years under this roof—my entire life so far, I may say—that I hope you have been glad to hear of it for my sake. I could never enjoy it without exchanging congratulations with you. If we have ever misunderstood one another at all, pray my dear boys let us forgive and forget. I have a great tenderness for you, and I am sure you return it. I want, in the fullness of a grateful heart, to shake hands with you every one. I have come back to do it, if you please, my dear boys."

Since the President had begun to cry, several other fellows had broken out here and there; but now, when Old Cheeseman began with him as first boy, laid his left hand affectionately on his shoulder and gave him his right; and when the President said "Indeed I don't deserve it, sir; upon my honor I don't;" there was sobbing and crying all over the school. Every other fellow said he didn't deserve it, much in the same way; but Old Cheeseman, not minding that a bit, went cheerfully round to every boy, and wound up with every master—finishing off the Reverend last.

Then a snivelling little chap in a corner, who was always under some punishment or other, set up a shrill cry of "Success to Old Cheeseman! Hooray!" The Reverend glared upon him, and said "*Mr.* Cheeseman, Sir." But, Old Cheeseman protesting that he liked his old name a great deal better

than his new one, all our fellows took up the cry; and, for I don't know how many minutes, there was such a thundering of feet and hands, and such a roaring of Old Cheeseman, as never was heard.

After that, there was a spread in the dining room of the most magnificent kind. Fowls, tongues, preserves, fruits, confectioneries, jellies, neguses, barley-sugar temples, trifles, crackers—eat all you can and pocket what you like—all at Old Cheeseman's expense. After that, speeches, whole holiday, double and treble sets of all manners of games, donkeys, pony-chaises and drive yourself, dinner for all the masters at the Seven Bells, (twenty pounds a-head our fellows estimated it at,) an annual holiday and feast fixed for that day every year, and another on Old Cheeseman's birthday—Reverend bound down before the fellows to allow it, so that he could never back out—all at Old Cheeseman's expense.

And didn't our fellows go down in a body and cheer outside the Seven Bells? O no!

But there's something else besides. Don't look at the next story-teller, for there's more yet. Next day, it was resolved that the Society should make it up with Jane, and then be dissolved. What do you think of Jane being gone, though! "What? Gone for ever?" said our fellows, with long faces. "Yes, to be sure," was all the answer they could get. None of the people about the house would say anything more. At length, the first boy took upon himself to ask the Reverend whether our old friend Jane was really gone? The Reverend (he has got a daughter at home—turn-up nose, and red) replied severely, "Yes sir, Miss Pitt is gone." The idea of calling Jane Miss Pitt! Some said she had been sent away in disgrace for taking money from Old Cheeseman; others said she had gone into Old Cheeseman's service at a rise of ten pounds a year. All that our fellows knew, was, she was gone.

It was two or three months afterwards, when, one afternoon, an open carriage stopped at the cricket-field, just outside bounds, with a lady and gentleman in it, who looked at the game a long time and stood up to see it played. Nobody thought much about them, until the same little snivelling chap came in, against all rules, from the post where he was Scout, and said, "it's Jane!" Both Elevens forgot the game directly, and ran crowding round the carriage. It *was* Jane! In such a bonnet! And if you'll believe me, Jane was married to Old Cheeseman.

It soon became quite a regular thing when our fellows were hard at it in the playground, to see a carriage at the low part of the wall where it joins the high part, and a lady and gentleman standing up in it, looking over. The gentleman was always Old

Cheeseman, and the lady was always Jane.

The first time I ever saw them, I saw them in that way. There had been a good many changes among our fellows then, and it had turned out that Bob Tarter's father wasn't worth millions! He wasn't worth anything. Bob had gone for a soldier, and Old Cheeseman had purchased his discharge. But that's not the carriage. The carriage stopped, and all our fellows stopped as soon as it was seen.

"So you have never sent me to Coventry after all!" said the lady, laughing as our fellows swarmed up the wall to shake hands with her, "Are you never going to do it?"

"Never! never! never!" on all sides.

I didn't understand what she meant then, but of course I do now. I was very much pleased with her face though, and with her good way, and I couldn't help looking at her—and at him too—with all our fellows clustering so joyfully about them.

They soon took notice of me as a new boy, so I thought I might as well swarm up the wall myself, and shake hands with them as the rest did. I was quite as glad to see them

as the rest were, and was quite as familiar with them in a moment.

"Only a fortnight now," said Old Cheeseman, "to the holidays. Who stops? Anybody?"

A good many fingers pointed at me, and a good many voices cried, "He does!" For it was the year when you were all away, and rather low I was about it, I can tell you.

"Oh!" said Old Cheeseman. "But it's solitary here in the holiday time. He had better come to us."

So I went to their delightful house, and was as happy as I could possibly be. They understand how to conduct themselves towards boys, *they* do. When they take a boy to the play, for instance, they *do* take him. They don't go in after it's begun, or come out before it's over. They know how to bring a boy up, too. Look at their own! Though he is very little as yet, what a capital boy he is! Why, my next favorite to Mrs. Cheeseman and Old Cheeseman, is young Cheeseman.

So, now I have told you all I know about Old Cheeseman. And it's not much after all, I am afraid. Is it

## THE OLD LADY'S STORY.

I HAVE never told you my secret, my dear nieces. However, this Christmas, which may well be the last to an old woman, I will give the whole story; for though it is a strange story, and a sad one, it is true; and what sin there was in it I trust I may have expiated by my tears and my repentance. Perhaps the last expiation of all is this painful confession.

We were very young at the time, Lucy and I, and the neighbors said we were pretty. So we were, I believe, though entirely different; for Lucy was quiet, and fair, and I was full of life and spirits; wild beyond any power of control, and reckless. I was the elder by two years; but more fit to be in leading strings myself than to guide or govern my sister. But she was so good, so quiet, and so wise, that she needed no one's guidance; for if advice was to be given, it was she who gave it, not I; and I never knew her judgment or perception fail. She was the darling of the house. My mother had died soon after Lucy was born. A picture in the dining-room of her, in spite of all the difference of dress, was exactly like Lucy; and, as Lucy was now seventeen and my mother had been only eighteen

when it was taken, there was no discrepancy of years.

One Allhallow's eve a party of us—all young girls, not one of us twenty years of age—were trying our fortunes round the drawing-room fire; throwing nuts into the brightest blaze, to hear if mythic "He"'s loved any of us, and in what proportion; or pouring hot lead into water, to find cradles and rings, or purses and coffins; or breaking the whites of eggs into tumblers half full of water, and then drawing up the white into pictures of the future—the prettiest experiment of all. I remember Lucy could only make a recumbent figure of hers, like a marble monument in miniature; and I, a maze of masks and skulls and things that looked like dancing apes or imps, and vapory lines that did not require much imagination to fashion into ghosts or spirits; for they were clearly human in the outline, but thin and vapory. And we all laughed a great deal, and teased one another, and were as full of fun and mischief, and innocence and thoughtlessness, as a nest of young birds.

There was a certain room at the other end of our rambling old manor-house, which was said to be haunted, and which my father



had therefore discontinued as a dwelling-room, so that we children might not be frightened by foolish servants; and he had made it into a lumber-place—a kind of ground-floor granary—where no one had any business. Well, it was proposed that one of us should go into this room alone, lock the door, stand before the glass, pare and eat an apple very deliberately, looking fixedly in the glass all the time; and then, if the mind never once wandered, the future husband would be clearly shown in the glass. As I was always the foolhardy girl of every party, and was, moreover, very desirous of seeing that apocryphal individual, my future husband, (whose non-appearance I used to wonder at and bewail in secret) I was glad enough to make the trial, notwithstanding the entreaties of some of the more timid. Lucy, above all, clung to me, and besought me earnestly not to go—at last, almost with tears. But my pride of courage, and my curiosity, and a certain nameless feeling of attraction, were too strong for me. I laughed Lucy and her abettors into silence; uttered half a dozen bravadoes; and taking up a bed-room candle, passed through the long silent passages, to the cold, dark, deserted room—my heart beating with excitement, my foolish head dizzy with hope and faith. The church-clock chimed a quarter past twelve as I opened the door.

It was an awful night. The windows shook, as if every instant they would burst in with some strong man's hand on the bars, and his shoulder against the frames; and the trees howled and shrieked, as if each branch were sentient and in pain. The ivy beat against the window, sometimes with fury, and sometimes with the leaves slowly scraping against the glass, and drawing out long shrill sounds, like spirits crying to each other. In the room itself it was worse. Rats had made it their refuge for many years, and they rushed behind the wainscot and down inside the walls, bringing with them showers of lime and dust, which rattled like chains, or sounded like men's feet hurrying to and fro; and every now and then, a cry broke through the room, one could not tell from where or from what, but a cry, distinct and human; heavy blows seemed to be struck on the floor, which cracked like parting ice beneath my feet, and loud knockings shook the walls. Yet in this tumult, I was not afraid. I reasoned on each new sound very calmly—and said, "Those are rats," or "those are leaves," and "birds in the chimney," or "owls in the ivy," as each new howl or scream struck my ear. And I was not in the least frightened or disturbed; it all seemed natural and familiar. I placed the candle on a table in the midst of the room, where an old broken mirror stood; and, looking steadily into the glass (having first wiped off the dust), I began to eat Eve's

forbidden fruit, wishing intently, as I had been bidden, for the apparition of my future husband.

In about ten minutes I heard a dull, vague, uncathartically sound; felt, not heard. It was as if countless wings rushed by, and small low voices whispering too; as if a crowd, a multitude of life was about me; as if shadowy faces crushed up against me, and eyes and hands, and sneering lips, all mocked me. I was suffocated. The air was so heavy, so filled with life, that I could not breathe. I was pressed on from all sides, and could not turn nor move without parting thickening vapors. I heard my own name, I can swear to that to-day! I heard it repeated through the room; and then bursts of laughter followed, and the wings rustled and fluttered, and the whispering voices mocked and chattered, and the heavy air, so filled with life, hung heavier and thicker, and the Things pressed up to me closer, and checked the breath on my lips with the clammy breath from theirs.

I was not alarmed. I was not excited; but I was fascinated and spell-bound; yet with every sense seeming to possess ten times its natural power. I still went on looking in the glass, still earnestly desiring an apparition, when suddenly I saw a man's face peering over my shoulder in the glass. Girls, I could draw that face to this hour! The low forehead, with the short curling hair, black as jet, growing down in a sharp point; the dark eyes, beneath thick eye-brows, burning with a peculiar light; the nose and the dilating nostrils; the thin lips, curling into a smile, I see them all plainly before me now. And—O, the smile that it was!—the mockery and sneer, the derision, the sarcasm, the contempt, the victory that were in it! even then it struck into me a sense of submission. The eyes looked full into mine; those eyes and mine fastened on each other; and, as I ended my task, the church clock chimed the half-hour; and, suddenly released, as if from a spell, I turned round, expecting to see a living man standing beside me. But I met only the chill air coming in from the loose window, and the solitude of the dark night. The Life had gone; the wings had rushed away; the voices had died out, and I was alone; with the rats behind the wainscot, the owls hooting in the ivy, and the wind howling through the trees.

Convinced that either some trick had been played me, or that some one was concealed in the room, I searched every corner of it. I lifted lids of boxes filled with the dust of ages and with rotting paper lying like bleaching skin. I took down the chimney-board, and soot and ashes flew up in clouds. I opened dim old closets, where all manner of foul insects had made their homes, and where daylight had not entered for generations; but I found nothing. Satisfied that

nothing human was in the room, and that no one could have been there to-night, nor for many months, if not years, and still nerved to a state of desperate courage, I went back to the drawing-room. But, as I left that room I felt that something flowed out with me; and, all through the long passages, I retained the sensation that this something was behind me. My steps were heavy, the consciousness of pursuit having paralysed not quickened me; for I knew that when I left that haunted room I had not left it alone. As I opened the drawing-room door, the blazing fire and the strong lamp-light bursting out upon me with a peculiar expression of cheerfulness and welcome, I heard a laugh close at my elbow, and felt a hot blast across my neck. I started back, but the laugh died away, and all I saw were two points of light, fiery and flaming, that somehow fashioned themselves into eyes beneath their heavy brows, and looked at me meaningly through the darkness.

They all wanted to know what I had seen; but I refused to say a word; not liking to tell a falsehood then, and not liking to expose myself to ridicule. For I felt that what I had seen was true, and that no sophistry and no argument, no reasoning and no ridicule, could shake my belief in it. My sweet Lucy came up to me, seeing me look so pale and wild, threw her arms around my neck, and leaned forward to kiss me. As she bent her head, I felt the same warm blast rush over my lips, and my sister, cried, "Why, Lizzie, your lips burn like fire!"

And so they did, and for long after. The Presence was with me still, never leaving me day nor night: by my pillow, its whispering voice often waking me from wild dreams; by my side in the broad sunlight; by my side in the still moonlight: never absent, busy at my brain, busy at my heart—a form ever banded to me. It flitted like a cold cloud between my sweet sister's eyes and mine, and dimmed them so that I could scarcely see their beauty. It drowned my father's voice, and his words fell confused and indistinct.

Not long after, a stranger came into our neighborhood. He bought Green Howe, a deserted old property by the river side, where no one had lived for many, many years; not since the young bride, Mrs. Braithwaite, had been found in the river one morning, entangled among the dank weeds and dripping alders, strangled and drowned, and her husband dead—none knew how—lying by the chapel door. The place had had a bad name ever since, and no one would live there. However, it was said that a stranger, who had been long in the East, a Mr. Felix, had now bought it, and that he was coming to reside there. And, true enough, one day the whole of our little town of Thornhill was in a state of excitement;

for a traveling carriage and four, followed by another full of servants—Hindoos, or Lascars, or Negroes; dark-colored, strange-looking people—passed through, and Mr. Felix took possession of Green Howe.

My father called on him after a time; and I, as the mistress of the house, went with him. Green Howe had been changed, as if by magic, and we both said so together, as we entered the iron gates that led up the broad walk. The ruined garden was one mass of plants, fresh and green, many of them quite new to me; and the shrubbery, which had been a wilderness, was restored to order. The house looked larger than before, now that it was so beautifully decorated; and the broken trellis-work, which used to hang dangling among the ivy, was matted with creeping roses, and jasmine, which left on me the impression of having been in flower, which was impossible. It was a fairy palace; and we could scarcely believe that this was the deserted, ill-omened Green Howe. The foreign servants, too, in Eastern dresses, covered with rings, and necklaces, and ear rings, the foreign smells of sandal-wood, and camphor, and musk; the curtains that hung everywhere in place of doors, some of velvet, and some of cloth of gold; the air of luxury, such as I, a simple country girl, had never seen before, made such a powerful impression on me that I felt as if carried away to some unknown region. As we entered, Mr. Felix came to meet us; and, drawing aside a heavy curtain that seemed all of gold and fire—for the flame-colored flowers danced and quivered on the gold—he led us into an inner room, where the darkened light, the atmosphere heavy with perfumes, the statues, the birds like living jewels, the magnificence of stuffs, and the luxuriousness of arrangement overpowered me. I felt as if I had sunk into a lethargy in which I heard only the rich voice, and saw only the form of our stranger host.

He was certainly very handsome; tall, dark, yet pale as marble: his very lips were pale; with eyes that were extremely bright, but which had an expression behind them that subdued me. His manners were graceful. He was very cordial to us, and made us stay a long time, taking us through his grounds to see his improvements, and pointing out here and there further alterations to be made, all with such a disregard for local difficulties, and for cost, that, had he been one of the princes of the genii he could not have talked more royally. He was more than merely attentive to me; speaking to me often and in a lower voice, bending down near to me, and looking at me with eyes that thrilled through every nerve and fibre. I saw that my father was uneasy; and when we left, I asked him how he liked our new neighbor. He said, "Not much, Lizzie,"



with a grave and almost displeased look, as if he had probed the weakness I was scarcely conscious of myself. I thought at the time that he was harsh.

However, as there was nothing positively to object to in Mr. Felix, my father's impulse of distrust could not well be indulged without rudeness; and my dear father was too thoroughly a gentleman ever to be rude even to his enemy. We therefore saw a great deal of the stranger, who established himself in our house on the most familiar footing, and forced on my father and Lucy an intimacy they both disliked but could not avoid. For it was forced with such consummate skill and tact, that there was nothing which the most rigid could object to.

I gradually became an altered being under his influence. In one thing only a happier—in the loss of the voice and the form which had haunted me. Since I had known Felix this terror had gone. The reality had absorbed the shadow. But in nothing else was this strange man's influence over me beneficial. I remember that I used to hate myself for my excessive irritability of temper when I was away from him. Everything at home displeased me. Everything seemed so small and mean, and old and poor after the lordly glory of that house; and the very caresses of my family and the olden school-day friends were irksome and hateful to me. All except my Lucy lost its charm; and to her I was faithful as ever; to her I never changed. But her influence seemed to war with his wonderfully. When with him I felt borne away in a torrent. His words fell upon me mysterious and thrilling, and he gave me fleeting glimpses into worlds which had never opened themselves to me before; glimpses seen and gone like the Arabian gardens.

When I came back to my sweet sister, her pure eyes and the holy light that lay in them, her gentle voice speaking of the sacred things of heaven and the earnest things of life, seemed to me like a former existence: a state I had lived in years ago. But this divided influence nearly killed me; it seemed to part my very soul and wrench my being in twain; and this more than all the rest, made me sad beyond anything people believed possible in one so gay and reckless as I had been.

My father's dislike to Felix increased daily; and Lucy, who had never been known to use a harsh word in her life, from the first refused to believe a thought of good in him, or to allow him one single claim to praise. She used to cling to me in a wild, beseeching way, and entreat me with prayers, such as a mother might have poured out before an erring child, to stop in time, and to return to those who loved me. "For your soul is lost from among us, Lizzie," she used to say; "and nothing but a frame

remains of the full life of love you once gave us!" But one word, one look, from Felix was enough to make me forget every tear and every prayer of her who, until now, had been my idol and my law.

At last my dear father commanded me not to see Felix again. I felt as if I should have died. In vain I wept and prayed. In vain I gave full license to my thoughts, and suffered words to pour from my lips which ought never to have crept into my heart. In vain; my father was inexorable.

I was in the drawing-room. Suddenly, noiselessly, Felix was beside me. He had not entered by the door which was directly in front of me; and the window was closed. I never could understand this sudden appearance; for I am certain that he had not been concealed.

"Your father has spoken of me, Lizzie?" he said, with a singular smile. I was silent.

"And has forbidden you to see me again?" he continued.

"Yes," I answered impelled to speak by something stronger than my will.

"And you intend to obey him?"

"No," I said again, in the same manner, as if I had been talking in a dream.

He smiled again. Who was he so like when he smiled? I could not remember, and yet I knew that he was like some one I had seen—a face that hovered outside my memory, on the horizon, and never floated near enough to be distinctly realized.

"You are right, Lizzie," he then said; "there are ties which are stronger than a father's commands; ties which no man has the right, and no man has the power to break. Meet me to-morrow at noon in the Low Lane; we will speak further."

He did not say this in any supplicating, nor in any loving manner; it was simply a command, unaccompanied by one tender word or look. He had never said he loved me—never; it seemed to be too well understood between us to need assurances.

I answered, "yes," burying my face in my hands, in shame at this my first act of disobedience to my father; and when I raised my head, he was gone. Gone as he had entered, without a footfall sounding ever so lightly.

I met him the next day, and it was not the only time that I did so. Day after day I stole at his command from the house, to walk with him in the Low Lane—the lane which the country people said was haunted, and which was consequently always deserted. And there we used to walk or sit under the blighted elm tree for hours; he talking, but I not understanding all he said: for there was a tone of grandeur and of mystery in his words, that overpowered without enlightening me, and that left my spirit dazzled rather than convinced. I had to give reasons at home for my long

absences, and he bade me say that I had been with old Dame Todd, the blind widow of Thornhill Rise, and that I had been reading the Bible to her. And I obeyed, although, while I said it, I felt Lucy's eyes fixed plaintively on mine, and heard her murmur a prayer that I might be forgiven.

Lucy grew ill. As the flowers and the summer sun came on, her spirit faded more rapidly away. I have known since, that it was grief more than malady which was killing her. The look of nameless suffering which used to be in her face, has haunted me through life with undying sorrow. It was suffering that I, who ought to have rather died for her, had caused. But not even her illness stayed me. In the intervals, I nursed her tenderly and lovingly as before; but for hours and hours I left her—all through the long days of summer—to walk in the Low Lane, and to sit in my world of poetry and fire. When I came back my sister was often weeping, and I knew that it was for me—I, who once would have given my life to save her from one hour of sorrow. Then I would fling myself on my knees beside her, in an agony of shame and repentance, and promise better things of the morrow, and vow strong efforts against the power and the spell that were on me. But the morrow subjected me to the same unhallowed fascination, the same faithlessness.

At last Felix told me that I must come with him; that I must leave my home, and take part in his life; that I belonged to him and to him only, and that I could not break the tablet of a fate ordained; that I was his destiny, and he mine, and that I must fulfil the law which the stars had written in the sky. I fought against this. I spoke of my father's anger, and of my sister's illness. I prayed to him for pity, not to force this on me, and knelt in the shadows of the autumn sunset to ask from him forbearance.

I did not yield this day, nor the next, nor for many days. At last he conquered. When I said "Yes," he kissed the scarf I wore round my neck. Until then he had never touched even my hand with his lips. I consented to leave my sister, who I well knew was dying; I consented to leave my father, whose whole life had been one act of love and care for his children; and to bring a stain on our name, unstained until then. I consented to leave those who loved me, all I loved, for a stranger.

All was prepared; the hurrying clouds, lead colored, and the howling wind, the fit companions in nature with the evil and the despair of my soul. Lucy was worse to-day; but though I felt going to my death in leaving her, I could not resist. Had his voice called me to the scaffold, I must have gone. It was the last day of October, and at midnight when I was to leave the house. I had kissed my sleeping sister, who was dreaming

in her sleep and cried, and grasped my hand, called aloud, "Lizzie, Lizzie! Come back!" But the spell was on me, and I left her; and still her dreaming voice called out, creaking with sobs, "Not there! not there, Lizzie! Come back to me!"

I was to leave the house by the large, old, haunted room that I have spoken of before; Felix waiting for me outside. And, a little after twelve o'clock, I opened the door to pass through. This time the chill, and the damp, and the darkness unnerved me. The broken mirror was in the middle of the room, as before, and, in passing it, I mechanically raised my eyes. Then I remembered that it was Allhallow's eve, the anniversary of the apparition of last year. As I looked, the room, which had been so deadly still, became filled with the sound I had heard before. The rushing of large wings, and the crowd of whispering voices flowed like a river round me; and again, glaring into my eyes, was the same face in the glass that I had seen before, the sneering smile, even more triumphant, the blighting stare of the fiery eyes, the low brow and the coal-black hair, and the look of mockery. All were there; and all I had seen before and since; for it was Felix who was gazing at me from the glass. When I turned to speak to him, the room was empty. Not a living creature was there; only a low laugh, and the far-off voices whispering, and the wings. And then a hand tapped on the window, and the voice of Felix cried from outside, "Come Lizzie, come!"

I staggered, rather than walked, to the window; and, as I was close to it—my hand raised to open it—there stood between me and it a pale figure clothed in white; her face more pale than the linen round it. Her hair hung down on her breast, and her blue eyes looked earnestly and mournfully into mine. She was silent, and yet it seemed as if a volume of love and of entreaty flowed from her lips; as if I heard words of deathless affection. It was Lucy; standing there in this bitter midnight cold—giving her life to save me. Felix called to me again, impatiently; and as he called, the figure turned, and beckoned me; beckoning me gently, lovingly, beseechingly; and then slowly faded away. The chime of the half-hour sounded; and, I fled from the room to my sister. I found her lying dead on the floor; her hair hanging over her breast, and one hand stretched out as if in supplication.

The next day Felix disappeared; he and his whole retinue; and Green Howe fell into ruins again. No one knew where he went, as no one knew from whence he came. And to this day I sometimes doubt whether or not he was a clever adventurer, who had heard of my father's wealth; and who, seeing my weak and imaginative character, had acted on it for his own purposes. All



that I do know is that my sister's spirit saved me from ruin; and that she died to save me. She had seen and known all, and gave herself for my salvation down to the last and supreme effort she made to rescue me. She died at that hour of half-past twelve; and at half-past twelve, as I live before you all, she appeared to me and recalled me.

And this is the reason why I never mar-

ried, and why I pass Allhallow's eve in prayer by my sister's grave. I have told you to-night this story of mine, because I feel that I shall not live over another last night of October, but before the next white Christmas roses come out like winter stars on the earth, I shall be at peace in the grave. Not in the grave; let me rather hope with my blessed sister in Heaven!

## OVER THE WAY'S STORY.

ONCE upon a time, before I retired from mercantile pursuits and came to live over the way, I lived, for many years, in Ursine Lane.

Ursine Lane is a very rich, narrow, dark, dirty, straggling lane in the great city of London (said by some to be itself as rich, as dark, and as dirty.) Ursine Lane leads from Cheapside into Thames Street, facing Sir John Pigg's wharf; but whether Ursine Lane be above or below Bow Church, I shall not tell you. Neither, whether its name be derived from a bear-garden, (which was in great vogue in its environs in Queen Bess's time,) or from an Ursuline Nunnery which flourished in its vicinity, before big, bad King Harry sent nuns to spin, or to do anything else they could. Ursine Lane it was before the great fire of London, and Ursine Lane it is now.

The houses in Ursine Lane are very old, very inconvenient, and very dilapidated; and I don't think another great fire (all the houses being well insured, depend upon it) would do the neighborhood any harm, in clearing the rubbishing old lane away. Number four tumbled in, and across the road on to number sixteen, a few years ago; and since then Ursine Lane has been provided with a species of roofing in the shape of great wooden beams to shore up its opposite sides. The district surveyor shakes his head very much at Ursine Lane, and resides as far from it as he can. The cats of the neighborhood find great delectation in the shoring beams, using them, in the night season, as rialtos and bridges, not of sighs, but of miauws; but foot passengers look wistfully and somewhat fearfully upwards at the wooden defences. Yet Ursine Lane remains. To be sure, if you were to pull it down, you would have to remove the old church of St. Nicholas Bearcroft, where the bells ring every Friday night, in conformity with a bequest of Master Miniver Squirrel, furrier, obit sixteen hundred and eighty-

four, piously to commemorate his escape from the paws of a grizzly bear while travelling in the wilds of Muscovy. You would have to demolish the brave gilt lion and the brave gilt unicorn at the extremity of the churchwarden's pew, who (saving their gender) with the clerk, the sexton, and two or three deaf old shopkeepers and their wives, are pretty nearly all the dearly beloved brethren whom the Reverend Tremaine Popples, M. A., can gather together as a congregation. Worse than all, if Ursine Lane were to come down—the pump must come down, the old established, constitutional, vested, endowed pump; built, so tradition runs, over a fountain blessed by the great St. Ursula herself. So Ursine Lane remains.

At a certain period of the world's history, it may have been yesterday, it may have been yesterday twenty years, there dwelt in this dismal avenue, a Beast. Everybody called him a Beast. He was a Manchester warehouseman. Now it is not at all necessary for a Manchester warehouseman—or, indeed, for any warehouseman—to be a beast or a brute, or anything disagreeable. Quite the contrary. For instance, next door to the Beast's were the counting-houses and warerooms of Tapperly and Grigg, also Manchester warehousemen, as merry, light-hearted, good-humored young fellows as you would wish to see. Tapperly was somewhat of a sporting character, rode away every afternoon on a high-stepping brown mare, and lounged regularly about the entrance to "Tats" whether he booked any bets or not. As for Grigg, he was the Coryphæus of all the middle class *soirees*, dancing academies and subscription balls in London, and it was a moving sight to see him in his famous Crusader costume at a Drury Lane Bal-Masque. Nor was old Sir William Watch (of the firm of Watch, Watch and Rover, Manchester warehousemen) at the corner, who was fined so many thousand pounds for

smuggling once upon a time, at all beastlike or brutish. He was a white-headed, charitable jolly old gentleman, fond of old port and old songs and old clerks and porters, and his Cheque-book was as open as his heart. Lactéal, Flewitt, and Company, again, on the other side of the Beast's domicile, the great dealers in gauzes and ribbons, were mild, placable, pious men, the beloved of Clapham. But the Beast was a Beast and no mistake. Everybody said he was; and what everybody says, must be true. His name was Braddlescroggs.

Barnard Braddlescroggs. He was the head, the trunk and the tail of the firm. No Co., no son, no nephew, no brothers: B. BRADDESEROGGS glared at you from either door-jamb. His warerooms were extensive, gloomy, dark, and crowded. So were his counting-houses, which were mostly underground and candle-lit. He loved to keep his subordinates in these dark dens, where he could rush in upon them suddenly, and growl at them. You came wandering through these subterraneans upon wan men, pent up among parasols and *cartons* of gay ribbons; upon pale lads in spectacles registering silks and merinos by the light of flickering, strong smelling tallow candles in rusty sconces. There was no counting-house community; no desk-fellowship: the clerks were isolated—dammed up in steep little pulpits, relegated behind walls of cotton goods, consigned to the *inpace* of bales of tarlatan and barege. The Beast was everywhere. He prowled about continually. He lurked in holes and corners. He reprimanded clerks on staircases, and discharged porters in dark entries. His deep, harsh, grating voice could ever be heard growling during the hours of business, somewhere, like a sullen earthquake. His stern Wellington boots continually creaked. His numerous keys rattled gaoler-fashion. His very watch, when wound up, made a savage gnashing noise, as though the works were in torment. He was a Beast.

Tall, square, sinewy, and muscular in person; large and angular in features; with a puissant, rebellious head of gray hair that would have defied all the brushing, combing, and greasing of the Burlington Arcade; with black bushy eyebrows nearly meeting on his forehead; with a horseshoe frown between his eyes; with stubbly whiskers, like horse-hair spikes, rather indented in his cheekbones than growing on his cheeks; with a large, stiff shirt collar and frill defending his face like *chevaux-de-frise*; with large, coarse, bony hands plunged in his trousers pockets; with a great seal and ribbons and the savage ticking watch I have mentioned,—such was Barnard Braddlescroggs. From the ears and nostrils of such men you see small hairs growing, indomitable by tweezers; signs of inflexibility of

purpose, and stern virility. Their joints crack as they walk. His did.

Very rich, as his father, old Simon Braddlescroggs, had been before him, B. Braddlescroggs was not an avaricious man. He had never been known to lend or advance a penny to the necessitous; but he paid his clerks and servants liberal salaries. This was a little unaccountable in the Beast, but it was said they did not hate him the less. He gave largely to stern charities, such as dragged sinners to repentance, or administered eleemosynary food, education and blows (in a progressively liberal proportion) to orphan children. He was a visiting justice to strict gaols, and was supposed not to have quite made up his mind as to what system of prison discipline was the best, unremitting corporal punishment, or continuous solitary confinement. He apprenticed boys to hard trades, or assisted them to emigrate to inclement climates. He was a member of a rigid persuasion, and one in high authority, and had half built a chapel at his own expense; but everybody said that few people thanked him, or were grateful to him for his generosity. He was such a Beast. He bit the orphan's nose off, and bullied the widow. He gave alms as one who pelts a dog with marrow-bones, hurting him while he feeds him. Those in his employment who embezzled or robbed him, were it of but a penny piece, he mercilessly prosecuted to conviction. Everybody had observed it. He sued all debtors, opposed all insolvents, and strove to bring all bankrupts within the meaning of the penal clauses. Everybody knew it. The merchants and brokers, his compeers, fell away from him on 'Change; his correspondents opened his hard, fierce letters with palpitating hearts; his clerks cowered before him; his maid servants passed him (when they had courage to pass him at all) with fear and trembling. The waiters at the "Cock" in Threadneedle Street, where he took a fiery bowl of Mulligatawney soup for lunch, daily, didn't like him. At his club at the West End he had a bow-window and a pile of newspapers all to himself, dined by himself, drank by himself, growled to himself.

There had been a Mrs. Braddlescroggs; a delicate, blue-eyed little woman out of Devonshire, who had been Beauty to the Beast. She died early. Her husband was not reported to have beaten her, or starved her, or verbally ill-treated her, but simply to have frightened her to death. Everybody said so. She could never take those mild blue eyes of hers off her terrible husband, and died, looking at him timorously. One son had been born to B. B. at her demise. He grew up a pale, fair-haired, frightened lad, with his mother's eyes. The Beast had treated him (everybody was indignant

at it) from his earliest years with unvarying and consistent severity; and at fourteen he was removed from the school of the rigid persuasion, where he had received his dreary commercial education, to his father's rigider, drier establishment in Ursine Lane. He had a department to himself there, and a tallow candle to himself.

The clerks, some twelve in number, all dined and slept in the house. They had a dismal dormitory over some stables in Grizzly Buildings, at the back of Ursine Lane; and dined in a dingy, uncarpeted room at the top of the building—on one unvarying bill of fare of beef, mutton, and potatoes—plenty of it, though, for the Beast never stinted them; which was remarkable in *such* a Beast. The domestic arrangements were superintended by a housekeeper—a tall, melancholy, middle-aged lady, supposed to have been once in affluent circumstances. She had been very good-looking, too, once, but had something the matter with her spine, and not unfrequently fell down stairs, or up stairs, in fits of syncope. When the Beast had no one else to abuse and maltreat, he would go up stairs and abuse Mrs. Plimmetts, and threaten her with dismissal and inevitable starvation. Business hours concluded at eight nightly, and from that hour to ten P. M., the clerks were permitted to walk where they listed—but exclusion and expulsion were the never failing result of a moment's unpunctuality in returning home. The porters slept out of the house, and the clerks looked at them almost as superior beings, as men of strange experiences and knowledge of life—men who had been present at orgies prolonged beyond midnight, men who had remained in the galleries of theatres till the performances were concluded.

Of the dozen clerks who kept the books of Barnard Braddlescrogs (save that grim auriferous banker's pass-book of his) and registered his wares, I have to deal with but two. My business lies only with blue-eyed, pale-faced William Braddlescrogs, and with John Simcox the corresponding clerk.

Simcox among his fellow clerks, Mr. Simcox among the porters, Jack Simcox among his intimates at the "Admiral Benbow" near Camberwell Gate, "you Simcox," with his growling chief. A gray-haired, smiling, red-faced simpleton was Simcox; kind of heart, simple of mind, affectionate of disposition, confiding of nature, infirm of purpose, convivial of habits. He was fifty years in age, and fifteen in wisdom. He had been at the top of the ladder once—a rich man at least by paternal inheritance, with a carriage and horses and lands; but when he tumbled (which he did at five-and-twenty, very quickly and right to the bottom), he never managed to rise again. The dupe of every shallow knave; the victim in every

egregious scheme; an excellent arithmetician, yet quite unable to put two and two together in a business sense; he had never even had strength of character to be his own enemy; he had always found such a multiplicity of friends ready to do the inimical for him. If you let him alone he would do well enough. He would not lose his money till you cheated him out of it; he would not get drunk himself, but would allow you to make him so, with the most charming willingness and equanimity. There are many Simcoxes in the world, and more rogues always ready to prey upon them: yet though I should like to hang the rogues, I should not like to see the breed of Simcox quite extinct.

John Simcox had a salary of one hundred and twenty pounds a year. If I were writing fiction instead of sober (though veiled) truth, I should picture him to you as a victim with some two score of sovereigns per annum. No; he had a hundred and twenty of those yellow tokens annually, for the Beast never stinted in this respect either, which was again remarkable in *such* a Beast. One hundred and twenty golden sovereigns annually, had John Simcox; and they were of about as much use to him as one hundred and twenty penny pieces. When a man has a quarter's salary amounting to twenty-seven pounds, receivable next Thursday, and out of that has a score of three pounds due at the "Admiral Benbow," and has promised to (and will) lend ten pounds to a friend, and has borrowed five more of another friend himself, which he means to pay; and has besides his little rent to meet, and his little butcher and his little grocer and his little tailor, it is not very difficult to imagine how the man may be considerably embarrassed in satisfying all these demands out of the capital. But, when the administrator of the capital happens to be (as Simcox was) a man without the slightest command of himself or his money, you will have no difficulty in forming a conviction that the end of Simcox's quarter-days were worse than their commencement.

Nor will you be surprised that "executions" in Simcox's little house in Carolinaterace, Albany-road, Camberwell, were of frequent occurrence; that writs against him were always "out," and the brokers always "in." That he was as well known in the county court as the judge. That orders for payment were always coming due and never being paid. His creditors never arrested him, however. If they did so, they knew he would lose his situation; so the poor man went on from week to week, and from month to month, borrowing here and borrowing there, obtaining small advances from loan societies held at public-houses, robbing Peter to pay Paul—always in a muddle, in short; but still smoking his nightly pipes, and drinking his nightly glasses, and sing-



ing his nightly songs; the latter with immense applause at the "Admiral Benbow."

I don't think Simcox's worldly position was at all improved by his having married (in very early life, and direct from the finishing establishment of the Misses Gimp, at Hammersmith) a young lady highly accomplished in the useful and productive arts of tambourwork and Poonah painting; but of all domestic or household duties considerably more ignorant than a Zooloo Kaffir. When Simcox had run through his money, an operation he performed with astonishing celerity, Mrs. Simcox, finding herself with three daughters of tender age and a ruined husband, took refuge in a flood of tears; subsequently met the crisis of misfortune with a nervous fever; and ultimately subsided into permanent ill health, curl papers, and shoes down at heel.

When the events took place herein narrated, the three daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Simcox were all grown up. Madeline, aged twenty-two, was a young lady of surprising altitude, with shoulders of great breadth and sharpness of outline, with very large black eyes and very large black ringlets, attributes of which she was consciously proud, but with a nose approaching to—what shall I say?—the snub. Chemists' assistants had addressed acrostics to her; and the young man at the circulating library was supposed to be madly in love with her. Helena, daughter number two, aged twenty, was also tall, had also black eyes, black ringlets, white resplendent shoulders, was the beloved of apothecaries, and the Laura of Petrarchs in the linen drapery-line. These young ladies were both acknowledged, recognized, established as beauties in the Camberwellian district. They dressed, somehow, in the brightest and most variegated colors; they had, somehow, the prettiest of bonnets, the tightest of gloves, the neatest of kid boots. Their sabbatical entrance to the parish church always created a sensation. The chemist's assistant kissed his hand as they passed; the young man at the circulating library laid down his book and sighed; passing young ladies envied and disparaged; passing young gentlemen admired and aspired; yet, some how, Miss Madeline would be twenty-three next birthday, and Miss Helena twenty-one, and no swain had yet declared himself in explicit terms; no one had said, "I have a hundred a year with a prospect of an advance: take it, my heart, and hand." Old Muggers, indeed, the tailor of Acacia Cottages, the friend, creditor, and boon companion of Simcox, had intimated, in his cups, at the "Admiral Benbow," his willingness to marry either of the young ladies; but his matrimonial proposals generally vanished with his inebriety; and he was besides known to be a dreadfully wicked old man, addicted to

drinking, smoking, and snuff-taking. As a climax of villany, he was supposed to have two wives already, alive and resident in different parts of the provinces.

And daughter number three—have I forgotten her? Not by any means. Was she a beauty? No. In the opinion of her sisters, Camberwell, and of the chemist's assistant, she was not a beauty. She had dark eyes; but they were neither brilliant nor piercing. She had dark hair; but wore it in no long or resplendent ringlets. She was an ordinary girl "a plain little thing" (according to the Camberwell opinion); there was "nothing about her" in the eyes of the chemist's assistant.

This young person (Bessy by name), from the earliest periods of authentic record to the mature age of sixteen, had occupied, in the Simcox household, an analogous position to that of the celebrated Cinderella. She did not exactly sit in the chimney corner among the ashes; but she lighted the fire, waited upon, dressed, and was otherwise the humble and willing drudge of her accomplished relatives. She did not exactly dress in rags; but she trotted about the house and neighborhood in a shabby brown merino frock, which she had woefully outgrown, a lamentable old beaver bonnet, and a faded Paisley shawl which held a sort of middle rank in appearance, between a duster and a pocket-handkerchief well to do in the world. As a child, she was punished for the things she did not do, and doubly punished for those she did do. As a girl, she ran of errands, fetched the beer, lighted the fire (as I have said), read the sentimental novels to mamma as she lay upon the sofa, and accompanied her sisters on the pianoforte when they rehearsed those famous songs and duets with which they did terrific execution in the Camberwell circles.

Honest Simcox, like a stupid, undiscerning, shiftless man as he was, did not entertain the domestic or Camberwell opinion concerning Bessy. He maintained that she had more sense in her little finger than her sisters put together (with his wife into the bargain, the honest fellow thought, I dare swear, though he did not dare to say so). He called her his little darling, his little Mentor, his willing, patient Betsy-petsy, with other foolish and weak-minded expressions of endearment. What else could you expect of a red-nosed warehouseman's clerk who fuddled himself nightly at the "Admiral Benbow!" Profoundly submissive to his wife in most instances, he had frequently presumed, during Bessy's nonage, to differ from Mrs. Simcox as to the amount of whipping meted out to his youngest daughter for childish delinquencies, and had once even dared to interfere when his lady undertook to inflict that punishment for a fault the child had never committed,



and to "stay justice in its mid career." So in process of time the alliance between the snubbed, neglected little girl and her father became of so close a nature as to be almost recognised and permitted by the rest of the family. Bessy was reckoned among the rest of the low company with whom the degraded Simcox chose to associate. She was allowed to pull off his muddy boots, to prepare his dinner, to fill his pipe and mix his grog when he muddled himself at home; and to lead him home, shambling, from the "Admiral Benbow," when he performed that operation abroad. Notably of late times she had been commissioned to fetch her papa home from Ursine Lane on the eventful quarter-day; and the meek, guiding-help of Bessy had often saved that infirm old fellow from many a dark and dangerous pitfall. The child would wait patiently outside the doors of public-houses while her father boozed within; she would lead him away gently but firmly from his riotous companions, or, meeting them and taking them aside, would plead passionately, tearfully, that they would not make papa tipsy to-night. Some of the disreputable personages with whom she was brought into such strange contact were quite subdued and abashed by her earnest, artless looks and speech. Jack Flocks himself, formerly of the Stock Exchange, now principally of the bar of the "Bag o' Nails," the very worst, most dissipated and most reckless of Simcox's associates, forebore drinking with Bessy's father for one whole week, and actually returned, in a private and mysterious manner, to Bessy, two half-crowns he had borrowed of him! So useful was this filial surveillance found to be by the other branches of his family that the quarter-day functions of our plain little Bessy were gradually extended, and became next of weekly and afterwards of diurnal occurrence. It was good to see this girl arrayed in the forlorn beaver bonnet and the faded Paisley shawl, with her mild, beaming, ordinary, little countenance, arrive at about a quarter to eight, at the Thames Street corner of Ursine Lane, and there wait patiently until her father's official duties were over. She became almost as well known in the neighborhood as St. Nicholas Bearward, or as the famous sanctified pump itself. The fellowship porters from Sir John Pigg's wharf touched their caps to her; the majestic beadle of St. Nicholas (a cunning man, omnipotent over the fire escape, king of the keys of the engine-house, and supposed to know where the fire-plug was, much better than the turncock) spoke her kindly; all the clerks in Braddlescrogg's house knew her, nodded to her, smiled at her, and privately expressed their mutual opinions as to what a beast Braddlescrogg was, not to

ask that dear little girl in, and let her rest herself, or sit by the fire in winter. The pot-boy of the "Bear and Ragged Staff," in his evening excursions with the supper beer, grew quite enamored (in his silent, sheepish fashion) of this affectionate daughter, and would, I dare say, had he dared, have offered her refreshment from his beer-can; nay, even the majestic wealthy Mr. Drum, the wholesale grocer and provision merchant, who stood all day with his hands in his pockets, under his own gibbet-like crane, a very Jack Ketch of West India produce, had addressed cheering and benevolent words to her from the depths of his double chin; had conferred figs upon her; had pressed her to enter his saccharine smelling warehouse, and rest herself upon a barrel of prime navy mess beef.

When the Beast of Ursine Lane met Bessy Simcox, he either scowled at her, or made her sarcastic bows, and asked her at what pot-house her father was about to get drunk that night, and whether he had taught *her* to drink gin, too? Sometimes he growled forth his determination to have no "bits of girls" hanging about his "place;" sometimes he told her she would not have to come many times more, for that he was determined on discharging that "drunken old dog," her papa. In the majority of instances, however, he passed her without any other notice than a scowl, and a savage rattle of the keys and silver in his pockets. The little maiden trembled fearfully when she saw him, and had quiet fits of weeping (in which a corner of the Paisley shawl was brought into frequent requisition) over against the pump, when he had spoken to her. There was a lad called William Braddlescrogg, with blue eyes and fair hair, who blushed very violently whenever he saw Bessy, and had once been bold enough to tell her that it was a fine evening. In this flagrant crime he was then and there detected by his father, who drove him back into the warehouse.

"As this is quarter-day, my Bessy," was the remark of John Simcox to his daughter, one twenty-eighth of March, "as this is quarter-day, I think, my child, that I will take one glass of ale."

It was about half-past eight, I think, and Bessy and her papa were traversing the large thoroughfare known as the New Kent Road. There is in that vicinity, as you are aware, that stunning Champagne Ale House, known as the "Leather Bottle." Into that stunning ale house did John Simcox enter, leaving his little Bessy outside, with fifteen pounds, the balance of what he had already expended of his quarter's salary. The night was very lowering, and rain appeared to be imminent. It came down, presently, in big, pattering drops, but John had promised not to be long.

Why should I tell, *in extenso*, the humiliating tale of how John Simcox got tipsy that night? How he forced all the money, pound by pound, from his little daughter? How, when after immense labor and trouble, he had at last been brought to his own street door, he suddenly started off at an unknown tangent (running hard and straight) and disappeared. How his daughter wandered about, weeping, in the pouring rain, seeking him; how, at two o'clock in the morning, a doleful party arrived at a little house in Camberwell—a very moist policeman, a weeping, shivering, drenched little girl over whom the municipal had in pity thrown his oilskin cape, and a penniless, hatless, drunken man, all covered with mud, utterly sodden, wretched, and degraded. Drop the curtain, for pity's sake.

The first impulse of Mrs. Simcox, after duly loading her besotted husband with reproaches, was to beat Bessy. The anger of this matron, generally so gently languid, was something fearful to view. An enraged sheep is frantic. She was frustrated, however, in her benevolent intention, first by the policeman, afterwards by Bessy herself, who, wet, fatigued, and miserable (but in an artful and designing manner, no doubt), first contrived to faint away, and next day chose to fall into a high fever.

In this fever—in the access thereof—she lay three long weeks. In a lamentable state of languor she lay many long weeks more. The brokers were in again. The parlor carpet was taken up and sent to the pawnbroker's. There were no invalid comforts in the house; no broth, nor chicken to make it, no arrowroot, no sago, no port wine, no anything to speak of, that was really wanted.

Stay, I am wrong. There were plenty of doctors; there was plenty of doctor's stuff. The chemists, apothecaries, and medical practitioners of the neighborhood, treated the Simcox family, and the little sick daughter, in particular, in a liberal and considerate manner. Not one charged a penny, and all were unremitting in attention. Kind-hearted Mr. Spoon, of Walworth, sent in—so to speak—a hamper of quinine. Young Tuckett, close by, who had just passed the Hall and College, and opened his shop, offered to do anything for Bessy. He would have dissected her, even, I am sure. Great Doctor Bibby came from Camberwell Grove, in his own carriage, with his own footman with the black worsted tags on his shoulder, and majestically ordered change of air, and red Port wine for Bessy Simcox. A majestic man was Dr. Bibby, and a portly, and a deep-voiced and a rich. His boots creaked, and his carriage-springs oscillated; but he left a sovereign on the Simcox mantelpiece, for all that.

So there was something of those things

needful in the little house at Camberwell. There was, besides, a certain nurse, active, devoted, patient, soothing, and gentle. Not Mrs. Simcox, who still lay on the sofa, now reading the sentimental novels, now moaning over the family difficulties. Not the Misses Simcox, who, though they did tend their sister, did it very fretfully and cross-grainedly, and unanimously declared that the child made herself out to be a great deal worse than she really was. This nurse had rather a red nose, and a tremulous hand. He came home earlier from the City now; but he never stopped at the stunning Champagne Ale House. He had not been to the "Admiral Benbow" for seven weeks. He sat by his daughter's pillow; he read to her; he carried her in his arms like a child as she was; he wept over the injury he had done her; he promised, and meant, and prayed for, amendment.

But what were the attentions of the doctors, the hamper of quinine, the sovereign on the mantelpiece, even, after all? They were but drops in the great muddled ocean of the Simcox embarrassments. A sovereign would not take Bessy to Malvern or Ventnor; the quinine would not give her red Port wine and change of air. The nurse grew desperate. There was no money to be borrowed, none to be obtained from the pawnbroker, none to be received until next quarter-day—before which, another month must elapse. Should he attempt to obtain a small advance of money from the Beast himself—the terrible Braddlescrogs? Should he offer him two hundred per cent. interest; should he fall down on his knees before him; should he write him a supplicatory letter; should he?

One evening, Simcox came home from the office, with many smiles upon his face. He had borrowed the money after many difficulties, from the chief clerk. Ten pounds. He would have to pay very heavy interest for it, but never mind. Mrs. Simcox should take Bessy to Ventnor for a fortnight or three weeks. Quarter day would soon come round. Soon come round. Now and then his family remarked, that the many smiles dropped from their papa's countenance like a mask, and that, underneath he wore a look rather haggard, rather weary, rather terrible; but then, you see, he would have to pay such a heavy interest for the ten pounds. Mrs. Simcox was delighted at the prospect of her country trip; poor Bessy smiled and thanked her papa; and the two Miss Simcoxes, who had their own private conviction that an excursion to the sea-side was the very thing for them; to air their beauty as it were, and not for that designing bit of a thing, Bessy, with her pale face, the two Miss Simcoxes, I say, went to bed in a huff.

To the pleasant Island of Wight in the British Channel, and the county of Hamp-

shire, did the little convalescent from Camberwell and her parent proceed. Bessy gathered shells and sea weed, and bought sand pictures on cardboard by the Undercliff, and sand in bottles, and saw the donkey at Carisbroke Castle, and wondered at Little St. Lawrence Church, and the magnificent yachting dandies at Cowes and Ryde, until her pale face grew quite rosy, and her dark eyes had something of a sparkle in them. Her mamma lay on the sofa as usual, exhausted the stock of sentimental novels in the Ventnor circulating library, varying these home occupations occasionally by taking exercise in a wheel-chair, and "nagging" at Bessy. The pair came back to London together, and were at the little mansion at Camberwell about a week before quarter-day. The peccant Simcox had been exemplarily abstemious during their absence; but his daughters had not been able to avoid remarking that he was silent, reserved, and anxious looking. You see he had to pay such heavy interest for the ten pounds he had borrowed of the chief clerk.

Three days before quarter-day, it was ten minutes to eight P. M., and Bessy Simcox was waiting for her father. She was confident, hopeful, cheerful now; she thanked God for her illness and the change it had wrought in her dear papa. Ten minutes to eight, and a hot summer's evening. She was watching the lamp-lighter going round with his ladder and his little glimmering lantern, when she was accosted by one of Mr. Braddlescrogg's porters. He was an ugly, forbidding man, with a vicious-looking fur cap (such as porters of workhouses and wicked skippers of colliers wear), and had never before saluted or spoken to her. She began to tremble violently when John Malingerer (a special favorite of the Beast's, if he could have favored any one, and supposed to be a porter after his own heart), addressed her.

"Hi!" said the porter, "you're wanted."

"Me—wanted?" Where? By whom?" stammered Bessy.

"Counting house—Governor—Bisness," replied John Malingerer, in short growling periods.

Bessy followed him, still trembling. The porter walked before her, looming like the genius of Misfortune. He led her through dingy wareroom after wareroom, counting house after counting house, where the clerks all were silent and subdued. He led her at last into a dingy sanctum, dimly lighted by one shaded lamp. In this safe there were piles of dingy papers and more dingy ledgers; with great piles of accounts on hooks in the wall, with their long iron necks and white bodies, like ghosts of dead bills who had hanged themselves; a huge iron safe throwing hideous shadows against the wall, and three silent men.

That is to say:

John Simcox, white, trembling and with wild eyes.

The Beast, neither more nor less a Beast than he usually was.

A tall man with a very sharp shirt collar, great coat, a black stock; very thin iron gray hair; a face which looked as if it had once been full of wrinkles and furrows which had been half ironed out; very peculiar and very heavy boots, brown Berlin gloves, and a demeanor which confirmed you immediately in a conviction that were you to strike at him violently with a sledge hammer, his frame would give forth in response no fleshy "thud," but a hard metallic ring.

The Beast was standing up: his back against a tall desk on spectral legs, his hands in his pockets. So also, standing, in a corner, was Simcox. So also, not exactly anywhere but somewhere, somehow, and about Simcox, and about Bessy, and particularly about the door, and the iron safe, in which he seemed to take absorbing interest, was the tall man in the peculiar boots.

"Come here, my girl," said the grating voice of Barnard Braddlescrogg the Beast.

My girl came there, to the foot of a table, as she was desired. She heard the grating voice; she heard, much louder, the beating of her own heart; she heard, loudest of all, a dreadful voice crying within her, crying over and over again that papa had borrowed ten pounds, and that he would have to pay very heavy interest for it, and that quarter day would soon come round, soon come round.

"This person's name is Lurcher," pursued the Beast.

The person coughed. The cough struck on the girl's heart like a knell. One.

"He is an officer."

An officer of what? Of the Household Brigade; of the yeomanry cavalry; of the Sheriff of Middlesex's battalion, a custom house officer, a naval officer, a relieving officer? But Bessy knew in a moment. She might have known it at first from the peculiar boots the officer wore—boots such as no other officer, or man, or woman can wear. But her own heart told her. It said plainly: "This is a police officer, and he has come to take your father into custody."

It was all told directly. Oh Bessy, Bessy! The ten pounds borrowed from the chief clerk, for which he would have to pay such heavy interest. The ten pounds were borrowed from the Petty Cash. The miserable Simcox's account was fifteen pounds deficient; he had promised to refund the money on quarter day; he had begged and prayed for time; the Beast was inexorable, and Lurcher, the officer, was there to take him to prison for embezzlement.

"You daughter of this man," said the



Beast, "you must go home without him. You tell his wife and the rest of his people, that I have locked him up, and that I'll transport him, for robbery."

"Robbery, no, sir," cried poor Simeox from the corner. "Before God, no! It was only for—"

"Silence!" said the Beast. "I'll prosecute you, I'll transport you, I'll hang you. By G—, I'll reform you, somehow." "Girl," he continued, turning to Bessy. "Go home. Stop! I'll send a clerk with you to see if there are any of my goods at home. I dare say there are, and you'll move 'em to-night. You won't though. I'll have a search warrant. I'll put you all in gaol. I'll transport you all. Come here, one of you fellows in the office" (this with a roar) "and go with this girl to Camberwell. Lurcher, take the rascal away."

What was poor Bessy to do? What could she do but fall down on her knees, clasping those stern knees before her? What could she do, but amid sobs and broken articulation say that it was all her fault? That it was for her, her dear papa had taken the money. That for her use it had been spent. What could she do but implore the Beast, for the love of heaven, for the love of his own son, for the love of his dead father and mother, to spare the object of his wrath, to send her to prison, to take all they had, to show them mercy, as he hoped mercy to be shown to him hereafter.

She did all this and more. It was good, though pitiful, to see the child on her knees in her mean dress, with her streaming eyes, and her poor hair all hanging about her eyes, and to hear her artless, yet passionate supplications. The Beast moved nor muscle nor face; but it is upon record that Mr. Lurcher, after creaking about on the peculiar boots for some seconds, turned aside into the shadow of the iron safe, and blew his nose.

"Lurcher," observed the Beast, "wait a moment before I give this man into your charge."

Mr. Lurcher bent some portion of his body between his occiput and his spine, and, considering himself temporarily relieved from the custody of his prisoner, threw the whole force of his contemplative energies into the iron safe, in which, as a subject, he appeared immediately to bury himself.

"Come here!" was the monosyllabic command of the Beast: addressed both to father and daughter. He led them into yet an inner sanctum, a sort of cupboard, full of books and papers, where there was a dreadful screw copying press, like an instrument of torture in the Inquisition.

"I will spare your father, child, and retain him in his situation," continued the Beast, without ever taking his hands from

his pockets, or altering an inflection of his voice, "on these, and these conditions only. My housekeeper is old and blind, and I shall soon turn her adrift, and let her go to the workhouse—everybody says so, I believe. The short time she will remain, she will be able to instruct you in as much as I shall require of you. You will have to keep this house for me and my clerks, and you must never quit it save once in six weeks, for six hours at a time; and I expect you to adhere to this engagement for two years. All communication between you and your family, save during your hours of liberty, I strictly prohibit. You will have twenty pounds a year as wages, half of which can go to augment your father's salary. At the same time I shall require from him a written acknowledgment that he has embezzled my monies; and if you quit my service I shall use it against him, ruin him, and imprison him. Make up your mind quickly, for the policeman is waiting."

What was poor Bessy to do? To part from her dear father, never to see him save at intervals, and then only for a short time; to know that he was in the same house, and not be able to run and embrace him. All this was hard, very hard, but what would not Bessy do to save her father from ruin and disgrace, and a prison? She would have laid down her life for him, she would have cheerfully consented never to see him again—till the great day comes when we shall all meet to part no more. She consented; Mr. Lurcher was privately spoken to and dismissed; the Beast subsided into his usual taciturnity; Bessy led her stricken, broken, trembling parent home. They passed through the long, dingy warerooms, the clerks whispering and looking as they passed.

Bessy's wardrobe was not sufficiently voluminous to occasion the expenditure of any very great time in packing. It was soon put up, in a very small shabby black box, studded with brass nails—many of them deficient. This, with Bessy herself, arrived at nine o'clock the next morning, as per agreement, at the Cheapside corner of Ursine Lane, where one of Mr. Braddlescrogg's porters was in waiting, who brought Bessy and her box to the dismal Manchester warehouse owned by the Beast of Ursine Lane.

And here, in the top floor of this lugubrious mansion, lived, for two long years, Bessy Simeox. At stated periods she saw her family for a few hours, and then went back to her prison-house. She carved the beef and mutton for the hungry clerks, she mended their linen, she gave out candles, she calculated washing bills. The old, old story of Beauty and the Beast was being done over again in Ursine Lane, Cheapside. Bessy ripened into a Beauty, in this dismal hot-

house; and the Beast was, as I have told you he always was. Beauty dwelt in no fairy palace; surrounded by no rose bushes, no sweet-smelling gardens, no invisible hands to wait on her at supper. It was all hard, stern, uncompromising reality. She had to deal with an imperious, sullen, brutal master. Everybody knew it. She dealt with him as Bessy had the art of dealing with every one. She bore with him meekly, gently, patiently. She strove to win his forbearance, his respect. She won them both, and more—his love.

Yes, his love! Don't be afraid; the Beast never changed to Prince Azor. He never lay among the rose bushes sick to death, and threatening to die unless Beauty married him. But at the end of the two years, when their contract was at an end, and when its fulfilment had given him time to know Bessy well, and to save the father through the child, he besought Bessy to remain with him in the same capacity, offering her munificent terms and any degree of liberty she required as regarded communication with her family. Bessy stayed. She stayed two years; she stayed three; she stays there now, to witness if I lie.

Not alone however. It occurred to William B., junior—the lad with the blue eyes and fair hair—to grow up to be a tall young man, and to fall violently in love with the pretty little housekeeper. It occurred to his father, instead of smiting him on the hip

immediately, or eating him up alive in wild beast fashion, to tell him he was a very sensible fellow, and to incite Bessy (we must call her Beauty now) to encourage his addresses, which indeed, dear little puss! she was nothing loth to do. So Beauty was married. Not to the Beast, but to the Beast's son; and Beauty and William and the Beast all removed to a pretty house in the prettiest country near London, where they live to this day, again to witness if I lie.

The Beast is a Beast no longer. Everybody admits that he is not a beast now; some few are even doubtful whether he ever *was* a Beast. He carries on the Ursine Lane business (in partnership with his son) still, and is a very rough-headed and rough-voiced old man. But the rough kernel and rough integument are worn away from his heart, and he is genial and jovial among his dependants. Charitable in secret, he had always been, even in his most brutish times; and you are not to believe (for Braddlescrogs talked nonsense sometimes and he knew it) that the old housekeeper, when she became blind or bedridden, was sent adrift or to the workhouse; that old John Simcox was not allowed sufficient funds for his pipe and his glass (in strict moderation) at the Admiral Benbow; or that the two Misses Simcox, when they married at last (after superhuman exertions), went dowerless. No. The Beast remembered, and was generous to them all.

## THE ANGEL'S STORY.

THROUGH the blue and frosty heavens,  
Christmas stars were shining bright;  
The glistening lamps of the great City  
Almost matched their gleaming light;  
And the winter snow was lying,  
And the winter winds were sighing,  
Long ago one Christmas night.

While from every tower and steeple,  
Pealing bells were sounding clear,  
(Never with such tones of gladness,  
Save when Christmas time is near)  
Many a one that night was merry,  
Who had toiled through all the year,

That night saw old wrongs forgiven,  
Friends, long parted, reconcile;  
Voices, all unused to laughter,  
Eyes that had forgot to smile,  
Anxious hearts that feared the morrow,  
Freed from all their cares awhile.

Rich and poor felt the same blessing  
From the gracious season fall;  
Joy and plenty in the cottage,  
Peace and feasting in the hall;  
And the voices of the children  
Ringing clear above it all!

Yet one house was dim and darkened—  
Gloom, and sickness, and despair  
Abiding in the gilded chamber,  
Climbing up the marble stair,  
Stillling even the voice of mourning—  
For a child lay dying there.

Silken curtains fell around him,  
Velvet carpets hushed the tread,  
Many costly toys were lying,  
All unheeded, by his bed;  
And his tangled golden ringlets  
Were on downy pillows spread.

All the skill of the great City  
To save that little life was vain ;  
That little thread from being broken ;  
That fatal word from being spoken ;  
Nay, his very mother's pain,  
And the mighty love within her,  
Could not give him health again.

And she knelt there still beside him,  
She alone with strength to smile,  
And to promise he should suffer  
No more in a little while,  
And with murmur'd song and story  
The long weary hours beguile.

Suddenly an unseen Presence  
Checked these constant mourning cries,  
Stilled the little heart's quick fluttering,  
Raised the blue and wondering eyes,  
Fixed on some mysterious vision,  
With a startled sweet surprise.

For a radiant angel hovered  
Smiling o'er the little bed ;  
White his raiment, from his shoulders  
Snowy dove-like pinions spread,  
And a starlike light was shining  
In a Glory round his head.

While, with tender love, the angel,  
Leaning o'er the little nest,  
In his arms the sick child folding,  
Laid him gently on his breast,  
Sobs and wailings from the mother,  
And her darling was at rest.

So the angel, slowly rising,  
Spread his wings ; and, through the air,  
Bore the pretty child, and held him  
On his heart with loving care,  
A red branch of blooming roses  
Placing softly by him there.

While the child thus clinging, floated  
Towards the mansions of the Blest,  
Gazing from his shining guardian  
To the flowers upon his breast,  
Thus the angel spake, still smiling  
On the little heavenly guest :

" Know, O little one ! that Heaven  
Does no earthly thing disdain ;  
Man's poor joys find there an echo  
Just as surely as his pain :  
Love, on earth so feebly striving,  
Lives divine in Heaven again !

" Once, in yonder town below us,  
In a poor and narrow street,  
Dwelt a little sickly orphan ;  
Gentle aid, or pity sweet,  
Never in life's rugged pathway  
Guided his poor tottering feet,

" All the striving anxious forethought  
That should only come with age,  
Weighed upon his baby spirit,  
Showed him soon life's sternest page ;  
Grim Want was his nurse, and Sorrow  
Was his only heritage !

" All too weak for childish pastimes  
Drearly the hours sped ;  
On his hands so small and trembling  
Leaning his poor aching head,  
Or, through dark and painful hours  
Lying sleepless on no bed,

" Dreaming strange and longing fancies  
Of cool forests far away ;  
Dreams of rosy happy children,  
Laughing merrily at play ;  
Coming home through green lanes, bearing  
Trailing branches of white May

" Scarce a glimpse of the blue heavens  
Gleamed above the narrow street,  
And the sultry air of Summer  
(That you called so warm and sweet,)  
Fevered the poor Orphan, dwelling  
In the crowded alley's heat.

" One bright day, with feeble footsteps  
Slowly forth he dared to crawl,  
Through the crowded city's pathways,  
Till he reached a garden wall ;  
Where 'mid princely halls and mansions  
Stood the lordliest of all.

" There were trees with giant branches,  
Velvet glades where shadows hide ;  
There were sparkling fountains glancing,  
Flowers whose rich luxuriant pride  
Wafted a breath of precious perfume  
To the child who stood outside,

" He against the gate of iron  
Pressed his wan and wistful face,  
Gazing with an awe-struck pleasure  
At the glories of the place ;  
Never had his fairest day-dream  
Shone with half such wondrous grace.

" You were playing in that garden  
Throwing blossoms in the air,  
And laughing when the petals floated  
Downward on your golden hair ;  
And the fond eyes watching o'er you,  
And the splendor spread before you,  
Told a House's Hope was there.

" When your servants, tired of seeing  
His pale face and want of woe,  
Turning to the ragged Orphan,  
Gave him coin, and bade him go,  
Down his cheeks so thin and wasted,  
Bitter tears began to flow.

" But that look of childish sorrow  
On your tender young heart felt,  
And you plucked the reddest roses  
From the tree you loved so well,  
Passing them through the stern grating.  
With the gentle word, ' Farewell !'

" Dazzled by the fragrant treasure  
And the gentle voice he heard  
In the poor forlorn boy's spirit,  
Joy the sleeping Seraph stirred -  
In his hand he clasped the flowers,  
In his heart the loving word.



"So he crept to his poor garret,  
 Poor no more, but rich and bright;  
 For the holy dreams of childhood—  
 Love, and Rest, and Hope, and Light—  
 Floated round the Orphan's pillow  
 Through the starry summer night.

"Day dawned, yet the vision lasted;  
 All too weak to rise he lay;  
 Did he dream that none spoke harshly—  
 All were strangely kind that day?  
 Yes; he thought his treasured roses  
 Must have charmed all ills away.

"And he smiled, though they were fading;  
 One by one their leaves were shed;  
 'Such bright things could never perish,  
 They would bloom again,' he said.  
 When the next day's sun had risen,  
 Child and flowers both were dead.

"Know, dear little one! our Father  
 Does no gentle deed disdain;  
 And in hearts that beat in heaven,  
 Still all tender thoughts remain;  
 Love on the cold earth remaining  
 Lives divine and pure again!"

Thus the angel ceased, and gently  
 O'er his little burthen leant;  
 While the child gazed from the shining  
 Loving eyes that o'er him bent,  
 To the blooming roses by him,  
 Wondering what that mystery meant

Then the radiant angel answered,  
 And with holy meaning smiled:  
 "Ere your tender, loving spirit  
 Sin and the hard world defiled,  
 Mercy gave me leave to seek you:  
 I was once that little child!"

## THE SQUIRE'S STORY.

In the year seventeen hundred and sixty-nine, the little town of Barford was thrown into a state of great excitement by the intelligence that a gentleman (and "quite the gentleman," said the landlord of the George Inn), had been looking at Mr. Clavering's old house. This house was neither in the town nor in the country. It stood on the outskirts of Barford, on the road-side leading to Derby. The last occupant had been a Mr. Clavering—a Northumberland gentleman of good family—who had come to live in Barford when he was but a younger son; but when some elder branches of the family died, he had returned to take possession of the family estate. The house of which I speak was called the White House, from its being covered with a grayish kind of stucco. It had a good garden to the back, and Mr. Clavering had built capital stables, with what were then considered the latest improvements. The point of good stabling was expected to let the house, as it was in a hunting county; otherwise it had few recommendations. There were many bedrooms; some entered through others, even to the number of five, leading one beyond the other; several sitting-rooms of the small and poky kind, wainscotted round with wood, and then painted a heavy slate color; one good dining-room, and a drawing-room over it, both looking into the garden, with pleasant bow-windows.

Such was the accommodation offered by the White House. It did not seem to be very tempting to strangers, though the good people of Barford rather piqued themselves

on it, as the largest house in the town; and as a house in which "townspeople" and "county people" had often met at Mr. Clavering's friendly dinners. To appreciate this circumstance of pleasant recollection, you should have lived some years in a little country town, surrounded by gentlemen's seats. You would then understand how a bow or a courtesy from a member of a county family elevates the individuals who receive it almost as much, in their own eyes, as the pair of blue garters fringed with silver did Mr. Bickerstaff's ward. They trip lightly on air for a whole day afterwards. Now Mr. Clavering was gone, where could town and county mingle?

I mention these things that you may have an idea of the desirability of the letting of the White House in the Barfordites' imagination; and to make the mixture thick and slab, you must add for yourselves the bustle, the mystery, and the importance which every little event either causes or assumes in a small town; and then, perhaps, it will be no wonder to you that twenty ragged little urchins accompanied "the gentleman" aforesaid to the door of the White House; and that, although he was above an hour inspecting it under the auspices of Mr. Jones, the agent's clerk, thirty more had joined themselves on to the wondering crowd before his exit, and awaited such crumbs of intelligence as they could gather before they were threatened or whipped out of hearing distance. Presently out came "the gentleman" and the lawyer's clerk. The latter was speaking as he followed the former over

the threshold. The gentleman was tall, well-dressed, handsome; but there was a sinister, cold look in his quick-glancing, light blue eye, which a keen observer might not have liked. There were no keen observers among the boys, and ill-conditioned gaping girls. But they stood too near; inconveniently close; and the gentleman, lifting up his right hand, in which he carried a short riding whip, dealt one or two sharp blows to the nearest, with a look of savage enjoyment on his face as they moved away whimpering and crying. An instant after, his expression of countenance had changed.

"Here!" said he, drawing out a handful of money, partly silver, partly copper, and throwing it into the midst of them. "Scramble for it! fight it out, my lads! come this afternoon, at three, to the George, and I'll throw you out some more." So the boys hurraed for him as he walked off with the agent's clerk. He chuckled to himself, as over a pleasant thought. "I'll have some fun with those lads," he said; "I'll teach 'em to come prowling and prying about me. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make the money so hot in the fire shovel that it shall burn their fingers. You come and see the faces and the howling.

"I shall be very glad if you will dine with me at two; and by that time I may have made up my mind about the house."

Mr. Jones, the agent's clerk, agreed to come to the George at two, but, somehow, he had a distaste for his entertainer. Mr. Jones would not like to have said, even to himself, that a man with a purse full of money, who kept many horses, and spoke familiarly of noblemen—above all, who thought of taking the White House—could be anything but a gentleman; but still the uneasy wonder as to who this Mr. Robinson Higgins could be, filled the clerk's mind long after Mr. Higgins, Mr. Higgins's servants, and Mr. Higgins's stud, had taken possession of the White House.

The White House was re-stuccoed (this time of a pale yellow color), and put into thorough repair by the accommodating and delighted landlord; while his tenant seemed inclined to spend any amount of money on internal decorations, which were showy and effective in their character, enough to make the White House a nine days' wonder to the good people of Barford. The slate-colored paints became pink, and were picked out with gold; the old-fashioned bannisters were replaced by newly gilt ones; but above all, the stables were a sight to be seen. Since the days of the Roman Emperor never was there such provision made for the care, the comfort, and the health of horses. But every one said it was no wonder, when they were led through Barford, covered up to their eyes, but curving their arched and delicate necks, and prancing with short high

steps, in repressed eagerness. Only one groom came with them; yet they required the care of three men. Mr. Higgins, however, preferred engaging two lads out of Barford; and Barford highly approved of his preference. Not only was it kind and thoughtful to give employment to the lounging lads themselves, but they were receiving such a training in Mr. Higgins's stables as might fit them for Doncaster or Newmarket. The district of Derbyshire in which Barford was situated, was too close to Leicestershire not to support a hunt and a pack of hounds. The master of the hounds was a certain Sir Harry Manley, who was *aut* a huntsman *aut nullus*. He measured a man by the "length of his fork," not by the expression of his countenance, or the shape of his head. But as Sir Harry was wont to observe, there was such a thing as too long a fork, so his approbation was withheld until he had seen a man on horseback; and if his seat there was square and easy, his hand light, and his courage good, Sir Harry hailed him as a brother.

Mr. Higgins attended the first meet of the season, not as a subscriber but as an amateur. The Barford huntsmen piqued themselves on their bold riding; and their knowledge of the country came by nature; yet this new strange man, whom nobody knew, was in at the death, sitting on his horse, both well breathed and calm, without a hair turned on the sleek skin of the latter, supremely addressing the old huntsman as he hacked off the tail of the fox; and he, the old man, who was testy even under Sir Harry's slightest rebuke, and flew out on any other member of the hunt that dared to utter a word against his sixty years' experience as stable-boy, groom, poacher, and what not; he, old Isaac Wormeley, was meekly listening to the wisdom of this stranger, only now and then giving one of his quick, up-turning, cunning glances, not unlike the sharp o'er-canny looks of the poor deceased Reynard, round whom the hounds were howling, unadmonished by the short whip, which was now tucked into Wormeley's well-worn pocket. When Sir Harry rode into the copse—full of dead brushwood and wet tangled grass—and was followed by the members of the hunt, as one by one they cantered past, Mr. Higgins took off his cap and bowed—half deferentially, half insolently—with a lurking smile in the corner of his eye at the discomfited looks of one or two of the laggards. "A famous run, sir," said Sir Harry. "The first time you have hunted in our country, but I hope we shall see you often."

"I hope to become a member of the hunt, sir," said Mr. Higgins.

"Most happy—proud, I'm sure, to receive so daring a rider among us. You took the Cropper-gate, I fancy; while some of our

friends here"—scowling at one or two cowards by way of finishing his speech. "Allow me to introduce myself—master of the hounds"—he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for the card on which his name was formally inscribed. "Some of our friends here are kind enough to come home with me to dinner; might I ask for the honor?"

"My name is Higgins," replied the stranger bowing, low. "I am only lately come to occupy the White House at Barford, and I have not as yet presented my letters of introduction."

"Hang it!" replied Sir Harry; "a man with a seat like yours, and that good brush in your hand, might ride up to any door in the county (I'm a Leicestershire man), and be a welcome guest. Mr. Higgins, I shall be proud to become better acquainted with you over my dinner table."

Mr. Higgins knew pretty well how to improve the acquaintance thus began. He could sing a good song, tell a good story, and was well up in practical jokes; with plenty of that keen worldly sense, which seems like an instinct in some men, and which in this case taught him on whom he might play off such jokes, with impunity from their resentment, and with a security of applause from the more boisterous, vehement or prosperous. At the end of twelve months Mr. Robinson Higgins was, out-and-out, the most popular member of Barford hunt; had beaten all the others by a couple of lengths, as his first patron, Sir Harry observed one evening when they were just leaving the dinner-table of an old hunting squire in the neighborhood.

"Because, you know," said Squire Hearn, holding Sir Harry by the button—"I mean, you see, this young spark is looking sweet upon Catherine; and she's a good girl, and will have ten thousand pounds down the day she's married, by her mother's will; and—excuse me, Sir Harry—but I should not like my girl to throw herself away."

Though Sir Harry had a long ride before him, and but the early and short light of a new moon to take it in, his kind heart was so much touched by Squire Hearn's trembling, tearful anxiety, that he stopped, and turned back into the dining-room to say, with more asseverations than I care to give.

"My good Squire, I may say, I know that man pretty well by this time; and a better fellow never existed. If I had twenty daughters, he should have the pick of them."

Squire Hearn never thought of asking the grounds for his old friend's opinion of Mr. Higgins; it had been given with too much earnestness for any doubts to cross the old man's mind as to the possibility of its not being well founded. Mr. Hearn was not a doubter or a thinker, or suspicious by nature; it was simply his love for Catherine, his only child, that prompted his anxiety in

this case; and after what Sir Harry had said, the old man could totter with an easy mind, though not with very steady legs, into the drawing-room, where his bonny blushing daughter Catherine and Mr. Higgins stood close together on the hearth-rug—he whispering, she listening with downcast eyes. She looked so happy, so like her dead mother had looked when the Squire was a young man, that all his thought was how to please her most. His son and heir was about to be married, and bring his wife to live with the Squire; Barford and the White House were not distant an hour's ride; and, even as these thoughts passed his mind, he asked Mr. Higgins if he could not stay all night—the young moon was already set—the roads would be dark—and Catherine looked up with a pretty anxiety, which however, had not much doubt in it, for the answer.

With every encouragement of this kind from the old Squire, it took everybody rather by surprise when one morning it was discovered that Miss Catherine Hearn was missing; and when, according to the usual fashion, in such cases, a note was found, saying that she had eloped with "the man of her heart," and gone to Gretna Green, no one could imagine why she could not quietly have stopped at home, and married in the parish church. She had always been a romantic, sentimental girl; very pretty and very affectionate, and very much spoiled, and very much wanting in common sense. Her indulgent father was deeply hurt at this want of confidence in his never-varying affection; but when his son came, hot with indignation from the Baronet's (his future father-in-law's house, where every form of law and ceremony was to accompany his own impending marriage), Squire Hearn pleaded the cause of the young couple with imploring cogency, and protested that it was a piece of spirit in his daughter, which he admired and was proud of. However, it ended with Mr. Nathaniel Hearn's declaring that he and his wife would have nothing to do with his sister and her husband. "Wait till you have seen him, Nat!" said the old Squire, trembling with his distressful anticipations of family discord, "He's an excuse for any girl. Only ask Sir Harry's opinion of him." "Confound Sir Harry! So that a man sits his horse well, Sir Harry cares nothing about anything else. Who is this man—this fellow? Where does he come from? What are his means? Who are his family?"

"He comes from the south—Surrey or Somersetshire, I forget which; and he pays his way well and liberally. There's not a tradesman in Barford but says he cares no more for money than for water; he spends like a prince, Nat. I don't know who his family are, but he seals with a coat of arms which may tell you if you want to know—



and he goes regularly to collect his rents from his estates in the south. Oh, Nat! if you would but be friendly, I should be as well pleased with Kitty's marriage as any father in the country."

Mr. Nathaniel Hearn gloomed, and muttered an oath or two to himself. The poor old father was reaping the consequences of his weak indulgence to his two children. Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Hearn kept apart from Catherine and her husband; and Squire Hearn durst never ask them to Levison Hall, though it was his own house. Indeed, he stole away as if he were a culprit whenever he went to visit the White House; and if he passed a night there, he was fain to equivocate when he returned home the next day; an equivocation which was well interpreted by the surly, proud Nathaniel. But the younger Mr. and Mrs. Hearn were the only people who did not visit at the White House. Mr. and Mrs. Higgins were decidedly more popular than their brother and sister-in-law. She made a very pretty sweet-tempered hostess, and her education had not been such as to make her intolerant of any want of refinement in the associates who gathered round her husband. She had gentle smiles for townspeople as well as country people; and unconsciously played an admirable second in her husband's project of making himself universally popular.

But there is some one to make ill-natured remarks, and draw ill-natured conclusions from very simple premises, in every place; and in Barford this bird of ill omen was a Miss Pratt. She did not hunt—so Mr. Higgins's admirable riding did not call out her admiration. She did not drink—so the well-selected wines so lavishly dispensed among his guests, could never mollify Miss Pratt. She could not bear comic songs, or buffo stories—so, in that way, her approbation was impregnable. And these three secrets of popularity constituted Mr. Higgins's great charm. Miss Pratt sat and watched. Her face looked immoveably grave at the end of any of Mr. Higgins's best stories; but there was a keen, needle-like glance of her unwinking little eyes, which Mr. Higgins felt rather than saw, and which made him shiver, even on a hot day, when it fell upon him. Miss Pratt was a dissenter, and, to propitiate this female Mordecai, Mr. Higgins asked the dissenting minister whose services she attended to dinner; kept himself and his company in good order; gave a handsome donation to the poor of the chapel. All in vain—Miss Pratt stirred not a muscle more of her face towards graciousness; and Mr. Higgins was conscious that, in spite of all his open efforts to captivate Mr. Davis, there was a secret influence on the other side, throwing in doubts and suspicions, and evil interpretations of all he said or did. Miss

Pratt, the little plain old maid, living on eighty pounds a year, was the thorn in the popular Mr. Higgins's side, although she had never spoken one uncivil word to him; indeed, on the contrary, had treated him with a stiff and elaborate civility.

The thorn—the grief to Mrs. Higgins was this. They had no children! Oh! how she would stand and envy the careless busy motion of half-a-dozen children; and then, when observed, move on with a deep, deep sigh of yearning regret. But it was as well.

It was noticed that Mr. Higgins was remarkably careful of his health. He ate, drank, took exercise, rested, by some secret rules of his own; occasionally bursting into an excess, it is true, but only on rare occasions—such as when he returned from visiting his estates in the south, and collecting his rents. That unusual exertion and fatigue—for there were no stage coaches within forty miles of Barford, and he, like most country gentlemen of that day, would have preferred riding if there had been—seemed to require some strange excess to compensate for it; and rumors went through the town, that he shut himself up, and drank enormously for some days after his return. But no one was admitted to these orgies.

One day—they remembered it well afterwards—the hounds met not far from the town; and the fox was found in a part of the wild heath, which was beginning to be enclosed by a few of the more wealthy towns-people, who were desirous of building themselves houses rather more in the country than those they had hitherto lived in. Among these the principal was a Mr. Dudgeon, the attorney of Barford, and the agent for all the county families about. The firm of Dudgeon had managed the leases, the marriage settlements, and the wills, of the neighborhood for generations. Mr. Dudgeon's father had the responsibility of collecting the land-owner's rents just as the present Mr. Dudgeon had at the time of which I speak: and as his son and his son's son have done since. Their business was an hereditary estate to them; and with something of the old feudal feeling, was mixed a kind of proud humility at their position towards the squires whose family secrets they had mastered, and the mysteries of whose fortunes and estates were better known to the Messrs. Dudgeon than to themselves.

Mr. John Dudgeon had built himself a house on Wildbury Heath; a mere cottage, as he called it; but though only two stories high, it spread out far and wide, and work-people from Derby had been sent for on purpose to make the inside as complete as possible. The gardens too were exquisite in arrangement, if not very extensive; and not a flower was grown in them but of the

rarest species. It must have been somewhat of a mortification to the owner of this dainty place when, on the day of which I speak, the fox, after a long race, during which he had described a circle of many miles, took refuge in the garden; but Mr. Dudgeon put a good face on the matter when a gentleman hunter, with the careless insolence of the squires of those days and that place, rode across the velvet lawn, and tapping at the window of the dining-room with his whip handle, asked permission—no! that is not it—rather informed Mr. Dudgeon of their intention—to enter his garden in a body, and have the fox unearched. Mr. Dudgeon compelled himself to smile assent, with the grace of a masculine Griselda; and then he hastily gave orders to have all that the house afforded of provision set out for luncheon, guessing rightly enough that a six hours' run would give even homely fare an acceptable welcome. He bore without wincing the entrance of the dirty boots into his exquisitely clean rooms; he only felt grateful for the care with which Mr. Higgins strode about, laboriously and noiselessly moving on the tips of his toes, as he reconnoitred the rooms with a curious eye.

"I'm going to build a house myself, Dudgeon; and, upon my word, I don't think I could take a better model than yours."

"Oh! my poor cottage would be too small to afford any hints for such a house as you would wish to build, Mr. Higgins," replied Mr. Dudgeon, gently rubbing his hands nevertheless at the compliment.

"Not at all! Let me see. You have dining-room, drawing-room"—he hesitated, and Mr. Dudgeon filled up the blank as he expected.

"Four sitting-rooms and the bed-rooms. But allow me to show you over the house. I confess I took some pains in arranging it, and, though far smaller than what you would require, it may, nevertheless, afford you some hints."

So they left the eating gentlemen with their mouths and their plates quite full, and the scent of the fox overpowering that of the hasty rasher of ham; and they carefully inspected all the ground-floor rooms. Then Mr. Dudgeon said;

"If you are not tired, Mr. Higgins—it is rather my hobby, so you must pull me up if you are—we will go up stairs, and I will show you my sanctum."

Mr. Dudgeon's sanctum was the centre room, over the porch, which formed a balcony, and which was carefully filled with choice flowers in pots. Inside, there were all kinds of elegant contrivances for hiding the real strength of all the boxes and chests required by the particular nature of Mr. Dudgeon's business; for although his office was in Barford, he kept (as he informed Mr. Higgins) what was the most valuable here,

as being safer than an office which was locked up and left every night. But, as Mr. Higgins reminded him with a sly poke in the side, when next they met, his own house was not over secure. A fortnight after the gentlemen of the Barford hunt lunched there, Mr. Dudgeon's strong-box, in his sanctum up stairs, with the mysterious spring bolt to the window invented by himself, and the secret of which was only known to the inventor and a few of his most intimate friends, to whom he had proudly shown it;—this strong-box, containing the collected Christmas rents of half a dozen landlords, (there was then no bank nearer than Derby,) was rifled; and the secretly rich Mr. Dudgeon had to stop his agent in his purchases of paintings by Flemish artists, because the money was required to make good the missing rents.

The Dogberries and Verges of those days were quite incapable of obtaining any clue to the robber or robbers; and though one or two vagrants were taken up and brought before Mr. Dunover and Mr. Higgins, the magistrates who usually attended in the court room at Barford, there was no evidence brought against them, and after a couple of nights' durance in the lock-ups they were set at liberty. But it became a standing joke with Mr. Higgins to ask Mr. Dudgeon, from time to time, whether he could recommend him a place of safety for his valuables; or, if he had made any more inventions lately for securing houses from robbers.

About two years after this time—about seven years after Mr. Higgins had been married—one Tuesday evening, Mr. Davis was sitting reading the news in the coffee-room of the George Inn. He belonged to a club of gentlemen who met there occasionally to play at whist, to read what few newspapers and magazines were published in those days, to chat about the market at Derby, and prices all over the country. This Tuesday night it was a black frost; and few people were in the room. Mr. Davis was anxious to finish an article in the "Gentleman's Magazine;" indeed, he was making extracts from it, intending to answer it, and yet unable with his small income to purchase a copy. So he staid late; it was past nine, and at ten o'clock the room was closed. But while he wrote, Mr. Higgins came in. He was pale and haggard with cold; Mr. Davis, who had had for some time sole possession of the fire, moved politely on one side, and handed to the new comer the sole London newspaper which the room afforded. Mr. Higgins accepted it, and made some remark on the intense coldness of the weather; but Mr. Davis was too full of his article, and intended reply, to fall into conversation readily. Mr. Higgins hitched his chair nearer to the fire, and put his feet on the



fender, giving an audible shudder. He put the newspaper on one end of the table near him, and sat gazing into the red embers of the fire, crouching down over them as if his very marrow were chilled. At length he said:

"There is no account of the murder at Bath in that paper?" Mr. Davis, who had finished taking his notes, and was preparing to go, stopped short, and asked:

"Has there been a murder at Bath? No! I have not seen anything of it—who was murdered?"

"Oh! it was a shocking, terrible murder!" said Mr. Higgins, not raising his look from the fire, but gazing on, his eyes dilated till the whites were seen all round them. "A terrible, terrible murder! I wonder what will become of the murderer? I can fancy the red glowing centre of that fire—look and see how infinitely distant it seems, and how the distance magnifies it into something awful and unquenchable."

"My dear sir, you are feverish; how you shake and shiver!" said Mr. Davis, thinking privately that his companion had symptoms of fever, and that he was wandering in his mind.

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Higgins. "I am not feverish. It is the night which is so cold." And for a time he talked with Mr. Davis about the article in the "Gentleman's Magazine," for he was rather a reader himself, and could take more interest in Mr. Davis's pursuits than most of the people at Barford. At length it drew near to ten, and Mr. Davis rose up to go home to his lodgings.

"No, Davis, don't go. I want you here. We will have a bottle of port together, and that will put Saunders in good humor. I want to tell you about this murder," he continued, dropping his voice, and speaking hoarse and low. "She was an old woman, and he killed her, sitting reading her Bible by her own fireside!" He looked at Mr. Davis with a strange searching gaze, as if trying to find some sympathy in the horror which the idea presented to him.

"Who do you mean, my dear sir? What is this murder you are so full of? No one has been murdered here."

"No, you fool! I tell you it was in Bath!" said Mr. Higgins, with sudden passion; and then calming himself to most velvet smoothness of manner, he laid his hand on Mr. Davis's knee, there, as they sat by the fire, and gently detaining him, began the narration of the crime he was so full of; but his voice and manner were constrained to a stony quietude; he never looked in Mr. Davis's face; once or twice, as Mr. Davis remembered afterwards, his grip tightened like a compressing vice.

"She lived in a small house in a quiet old-fashioned street, she and her maid. People said she was a good old woman; but for

all that she hoarded and hoarded, and never gave to the poor. Mr. Davis, it is wicked not to give to the poor—wicked—wicked, is it not? I always give to the poor, for once I read in the Bible that 'Charity covereth a multitude of sins.' The wicked old woman never gave, but hoarded her money, and saved, and saved. Some one heard of it; I say she threw a temptation in his way, and God will punish her for it. And this man—or it might be a woman, who knows?—and this person—heard also that she went to church in the mornings, and her maid in the afternoons; and so—while the maid was at church, and the street and the house quite still, and the darkness of a winter afternoon coming on—she was nodding over the Bible—and that, mark you! is a sin, and one that God will avenge sooner or later; and a step came in the dusk up the stair, and that person I told you of, stood in the room. At first he—no! At first, it is supposed—for, you understand, all this is mere guess work, it is supposed that he asked her civilly enough to give him her money, or tell him where it was; but the old miser defied him, and would not ask for mercy and give up her keys, even when he threatened her, but looked him in the face as if he had been a baby—Oh, God! Mr. Davis, I once dreamt when I was a little innocent boy that I should commit a crime like this, and I wakened up crying; and my mother comforted me—that is the reason I tremble so now, that and the cold, for it is very, very cold!"

"But did he murder the old lady?" asked Mr. Davis. "I beg your pardon, sir, but I am interested by your story."

"Yes! he cut her throat; and there she lies yet in her quiet little parlor, with her face upturned and all ghastly white, in the middle of a pool of blood. Mr. Davis, this wine is no better than water; I must have some brandy!"

Mr. Davis was horror-struck by the story, which seemed to have fascinated him as much as it had done his companion.

"Have they got any clue to the murderer?" said he. Mr. Higgins drank down half a tumbler of raw brandy before he answered.

"No! no clue whatever. They will never be able to discover him, and I should not wonder—Mr. Davis—I should not wonder if he repented after all, and did bitter penance for his crime; and if so—will there be mercy for him at the last day?"

"God knows," said Mr. Davis with solemnity. "It is an awful story," continued he, rousing himself: "I hardly like to leave this warm light room and go out into the darkness after hearing it. But it must be done," buttoning on his great coat—"I can only say I hope and trust they will find out the murderer, and hang him. If you'll take



my advice, you'll have a bed warmed, and drink a treacle-posset just the last thing; and, if you'll allow me, I'll send you my answer to Philologus before it goes up to old Urban."

The next morning Mr. Davis went to call on Miss Pratt, who was not very well; and by way of being agreeable and entertaining, he related to her all he had heard the night before about the murder in Bath, and really he made a very pretty connected story out of it, and interested Miss Pratt very much in the fate of the old lady—partly because of a similarity in their situations; for she also hoarded money, and had but one servant, and stopped at home alone on Sunday afternoons to allow her servant to go to church.

"And when did all this happen?" she asked.

"I don't know if Mr. Higgins named the day; and yet I think it must have been on this very last Sunday."

"And to-day is Wednesday. Ill news travels fast."

"Yes, Mr. Higgins thought it might have been in the London newspaper."

"That it could never be. Where did Mr. Higgins learn all about it?"

"I don't know, I did not ask; I think he only came home yesterday: he had been south to collect his rents, somebody said."

Miss Pratt grunted. She used to vent her dislike and suspicions of Mr. Higgins in a grunt whenever his name was mentioned.

"Well, I shan't see you for some days. Godfrey Merton has asked me to go and stay with him and his sister; and I think it will do me good. Besides," added she, "these winter evenings; and these murderers at large in the country; I don't quite like living with only Peggy to call to in case of need."

Miss Pratt went to stay with her cousin, Mr. Merton. He was an active magistrate, and enjoyed his reputation as such. One day he came in, having just received his letters.

"Bad account of the morals of your little town here, Jessy!" said he, touching one of the letters. "You've either a murderer among you, or some friend of a murderer. Here's a poor old lady at Bath had her throat cut last Sunday week; and I've a letter from the Home Office, asking to lend them 'my very efficient aid,' as they are pleased to call it, towards finding out the culprit. It seems he must have been thirsty, and of a comfortable jolly turn; for before going to his horrid work he tapped a barrel of ginger wine the old lady had set by to work; and he wrapped the spigot round with a piece of a letter taken out of his pocket, as may be supposed; and this piece of a letter was

found afterwards; there are only these letters on the outside, '*ns, Esq., -arford, -egworth,*' which some one has ingeniously made out to mean Barford, near Kegworth. On the other side there is some allusion to a race-horse, I conjecture though the name is singular enough: 'Church-and-King-and-down-with-the-Rump.'"

Miss Pratt caught at this name immediately; it had hurt her feelings as a dis-senter only a few months ago, and she remembered it well.

"Mr. Nat Hearn has—or had (as I am speaking in the witness-box, as it were, I must take care of my tenses), a horse with that ridiculous name."

"Mr. Nat Hearn," repeated Mr. Merton, making a note of the intelligence; then he recur-red to his letter from the Home Office again.

"There is also a piece of a small key, broken in the futile attempt to open a desk—well, well. Nothing more of consequence. The letter is what we must rely upon."

"Mr. Davis said that Mr. Higgins told him"—Miss Pratt began.

"Higgins!" exclaimed Mr. Merton, "*ns*. Is it Higgins, the blustering fellow that ran away with Nat Hearn's sister?"

"Yes!" said Miss Pratt. "But though he has never been a favorite of mine—"

"*ns*" repeated Mr. Merton. "It is too horrible to think of; a member of the hunt—kind old Squire Hearn's son-in-law! Who else have you in Barford with names that end in *ns*?"

"There's Jackson, and Higginson, and Blenkinsop, and Davis and Jones, Cousin! One thing strikes me—how did Mr. Higgins know all about it to tell Mr. Davis on Tuesday what had happened on Sunday afternoon?"

There is no need to add much more. Those curious in the lives of the highway-men may find the name of Higgins as conspicuous among those annals as that of Claude Duval. Kate Hearn's husband collected his rents on the highway, like many other "gentlemen" of the day; but having been unlucky in one or two of his adventures, and hearing exaggerated accounts of the hoarded wealth of the old lady at Bath, he was led on from robbery to murder, and was hung for his crime at Derby, in seventeen hundred and seventy-five.

He had not been an unkind husband; and his poor wife took lodgings in Derby to be near him in his last moments; his awful last moments. Her old father went with her everywhere but into her husband's cell; and wrung her heart by constantly accusing himself of having promoted her marriage with a man of whom he knew so little. He abdicated his squireship in favor of his son Nathaniel. Nat was pros-

perous, and the helpless silly father could be of no use to him; but to his widowed daughter the foolish fond old man was all in all; her knight, her protector, her companion, her most faithful loving companion. Only he ever declined assuming the office of her counsellor—shaking his head sadly, and saying—

“Ah! Kate, Kate! if I had had more wisdom to have advised thee better, thou need'st not have been an exile here in Brussels, shrinking from the sight of every English person as if they knew thy story.”

I saw the White House not a month ago; it was to let, perhaps for the twentieth time since Mr. Higgins occupied it; but still the tradition goes in Barford that once upon a time a highwayman lived there, and amassed untold treasures; and that the ill-gotten wealth yet remains walled up in some unknown concealed chamber; but in what part of the house no one knows.

Will any of you become tenants and try to find out this mysterious closet? I can furnish the exact address to any applicant who wishes for it.

## UNCLE GEORGE'S STORY.

We had devoted the morning before my wedding-day to the arrangement of those troublesome, delightful, endless little affairs, which the world says must be set in order on such occasions; and late in the afternoon, we walked down, Charlotte and myself, to take a last bachelor and maiden peep at the home which, next day, was to be ours in partnership. Goody Barnes, already installed as our cook and house-keeper, stood at the door, ready to receive us as we crossed the market-place to inspect our cottage for the twentieth time,—cottage by courtesy,—next door to my father's mansion, by far the best and handsomest in the place. It was some distance from Charlotte's house, where she and her widowed mother lived;—all the way down the lime-tree avenue, then over the breezy common, besides traversing the principal and only street, which terminated in the village market-place.

The front of our house was quakerlike, in point of neatness and humility. But enter! It is not hard to display good taste when the banker's book puts no veto on the choice gems of furniture, which give the finishing touch to the whole. Then pass through, and bestow a glance upon our living rooms, looking down upon that greatest of luxuries, a terraced garden, commanding the country—and not a little of that country mine already,—the farm which my father had given me, to keep me quiet and contented at home. For the closing perspective of our view, there was the sea, like a bright blue rampart rising before us. White-sailed vessels, or self-willed steamers, flitted to and fro for our amusement.

We tripped down the terrace-steps, and of course looked in upon the little artificial grotto to the right, which I had caused to be lined throughout with foreign shells and

glittering spars,—more gifts from my ever-bountiful father. Charlotte and I went laughingly along the straight gravel walk, flanked on each side with a regiment of dahlias; that led us to the little gate, opening to give us admission to my father's own pleasure-ground and orchard.

The dear old man was rejoiced to receive us. A daughter was what he so long had wished for. We hardly knew whether to smile, or weep for joy, as we all sat together on the same rustic bench, overshadowed by the tulip-tree, which some one said my father had himself brought from North America. But of the means by which he became possessed of many of his choicest treasures, he never breathed a syllable to me. His father, I very well knew, was nothing more than a homely farmer, cultivating no great extent of not too productive sea-side land; but Charlotte's lace dress, which she was to wear to-morrow—again another present from him—was, her mother proudly pronounced, valuable and handsome enough for a princess.

Charlotte half whispered, half said aloud, that she had no fear now that Richard Leroy, her boisterous admirer, would dare to attempt his reported threat to carry her off to the continent in his cutter. Richard's name made my father frown, so we said no more; we lapsed again into that dreamy state of silent enjoyment, which was the best expression of our happiness.

Leroy's father was called a farmer; but on our portion of the English coast there are many things that are well understood rather than clearly and distinctly expressed; and no one had ever enlightened my ignorance. My father was on speaking terms with him, that was all; courteous, but distant; half timid, half mysterious. He discouraged my childish intimacy with Richard; yet he did not go so far as to forbid it.

Once, when I urged him to allow me to accompany young Leroy in his boat, to fish in the Channel one calm and bright summer morning, he peremptorily answered, "No! I do not wish *you* to learn to be a smuggler." But then, he instantly checked himself, and afterwards was more anxious and kind to me than ever. Still Richard and I continued playfellows until we grew up, and both admired Charlotte. He would have made a formal proposal for her hand, if the marked discouragement of her family had not shut out every opportunity. This touched his pride, and once made him declare, in an off-hand way, that it would cost him but very little trouble to land such a light cargo as that, some pleasant evening, in France, or even on one of the Azore Islands, if orange groves and orange blossoms were what my lady cared about. It is wonderful how far, and how swiftly, heedless words do fly when once they are uttered. Such speeches did not close the breach, but, instead, laid the first foundation for one of those confirmed estrangements which village neighborhoods only know. The repugnance manifested by Charlotte's friends was partly caused by the mystery which hung to Richard's ample means. The choice was unhesitatingly made in my favor. In consequence, as a sort of rejected candidate, Richard Leroy really did lie, amongst us, under an unexpressed and indefinite ban, which was by no means likely to be removed by the roystering scornful air of superiority with which he mostly spoke of, looked at, and treated us.

Charlotte and I took leave of my father on that gray September evening with the full conviction that every blessing was in store for us which affection and wealth had the power to procure. Over the green, and up the lime-tree avenue, and then, good-night, my lady-love? Good-night, thus parting, for the very last time. To-morrow—ah! think of to-morrow. The quarters of the church clock strike half-past nine. Good-night, dear mother-in-law. And, once more, good-night, Charlotte!

It was somewhat early to leave; but my father's plans required it. He desired that we should be married, not at the church of the village where we all resided, but at one distant a short walk, in which he took a peculiar interest—where he had selected the spot for a family burial-place, and where he wished the family registers to be kept. It was a secluded hamlet; and my father had simply made the request that I would lodge for awhile at a farm-house there, in order that the wedding might be performed at the place he fixed his heart upon. My duty and my interest were to obey.

"Good night, Charlotte," had not long been uttered, before I was fairly on the way to my temporary home. Our village, and

its few scattered lights, were soon left behind, and I then was upon the open down, walking on with a springing step. On one side was spread the English Channel: and from time to time I could mark the appearance of the light at Cape Grinez, on the French coast opposite. There it was, coming and going, flashing out and dying away, with never-ceasing coquetry. The cliff lay between my path and the sea. There was no danger; for, although the moon was not up, it was bright starlight. I knew every inch of the way as well as I did my father's garden walks. In September, however, mists will rise; and, as I approached the valley, there came the offspring of the pretty stream which ran through it, something like a light cloud running along the ground before the wind. Is there a night fog coming on? Perhaps there may be. If so, better steer quite clear of the cliff, by means of a gentle circuit inland. It is quite impossible to miss the valley; and, once in the valley, it is equally difficult to miss the hamlet, Richard Leroy has been frequently backward and forward the last few evenings: it would be strange if we should chance to meet here, and on such an occasion.

On, and still on, cheerily. In a few minutes more I shall reach the farm, and then, to pass one more solitary night is almost a pleasurable delay, a refinement in happiness. I could sing and dance for joy. Yes, dance all alone, on this elastic turf! There: just one foolish caper; just one—

Good God! is this not the shock of an earthquake? I hasten to advance another step, but the ground beneath me quivers and sinks. I grasp at the side of the yawning pitfall, but grasp in vain. Down, down, down, I fall headlong.

When my senses returned, and I could look about me, the moon had risen, and was shining in at the treacherous hole through which I had fallen. A glance was only too sufficient to explain my position. Why had I always so foolishly refused to allow the farmer to meet me half way, and accompany me to his house every evening; knowing, as I did know, how the chalk and limestone of the district had been undermined in catcombs, sinuous and secret, for wells, flint, manure, building materials, and other purposes? My poor father and Charlotte!

Patience. It can hardly be possible that now, on the eve of marriage, I am suddenly doomed to a lingering death. The night *must* be passed here, and daylight will show some means of escape. I will lie down on this heap of earth that fell under me.

Amidst despairing thoughts, and a hideous waking nightmare, daylight slowly came.

The waning moon had not revealed the extremity of my despair; but now it was clearly visible that I had fallen double the height I supposed. But for the turf which



had fallen under me, I must have been killed on the spot. The hole was too large for me to creep up, by pressing against it with my back and knees; and there were no friendly knobs or protuberances visible up its smooth sides. The chasm increased in diameter as it descended, like an inverted funnel. I might possibly climb up a wall; but could I creep along a ceiling.

I shouted as I lay; no one answered. I shouted again—and again. Then I thought that too much shouting would exhaust my strength, and unfit me for the task of mounting. I measured with my eye the distances from stratum to stratum of each well-marked layer of chalk. And then, the successive beds of flint—they gave me the greatest hopes. If foot-holes could only be cut! Though the feat was difficult, it might be practicable. The attempt must be made.

I arose, stiff and bruised. No matter. The first layer of flints was not more than seven or eight feet overhead. Those once reached, I could secure a footing, and obtain a first starting-place for escape. I tried to climb to them with my feet and hands. Impossible! the crumbling wall would not support half my weight. As fast as I attempted to get handhold or footing, it fell in fragments to the ground.

But, a better thought—to dig it away, and make a mound so high that, by standing on it, I could manage to reach the flint with my hands. I had my knife to help me; and, after much hard work, my object was accomplished and I got within reach of the shelf.

My hands had firm hold of the horizontal flint. They were cut with clinging; but I found that, by raising myself, and then thrusting my feet into the chalk and marl, I could support myself with one hand only, leaving the other free to work. I did work; clearing away the chalk above the flint, so as to give me greater standing-room. At last, I thought I might venture upon the ledge itself. By a supreme effort, I reached the shelf; but moisture had made the chalk unctuous and slippery to the baffled grasp. It was in vain to think of mounting higher, with no point of support, no firm footing. A desperate leap across the chasm afforded not the slightest hope; because, even if successful, I could not for one moment maintain the advantage gained. I was determined to remain on the ledge of flint. Another moment, and a rattling on the floor soon taught my powerlessness. Down sunk the chalk beneath my weight; and the stony table fell from its fixture, only just failing to crush me under it. Stunned and cut, and bruised, I spent some time prostrated by half-conscious but acute sensations of misery. Sleep, which as yet I had not felt, began to steal over me, but could gain no mastery. With each moment of incipient unconsciousness,

Charlotte was presented to me, first, in her wedding-dress; next, on our terrace, beckoning me gaily from the garden below: then, we were walking arm-in-arm in smiling conversation; or seated happily together in my father's library. But the full consciousness which rapidly succeeded presented each moment the hideous truth. It was now broad day; and I realised Charlotte's sufferings. I beheld her awaiting me in her bridal dress; now hastening to the window, and straining her sight over the valley, in the hope of my approach; now stricken down by despair at my absence. My father, too, whose life had been always bound up in mine! These fancies destroyed my power of thought. I felt wild and frenzied. I raved and shouted, and then listened, knowing no answer could come.

But an answer did come: a maddening answer. The sound of bells, dull, dead, and in my hideous well-hole, just distinguishable. They rang out my marriage-peal. Why was I not buried alive when I first fell?

I could have drunk blood, in my thirst, had it been offered to me. Die I must, I felt full well: but let me not die with my mouth in flame? Then came the struggle of sleep; and then fitful, tantalizing dreams. Charlotte appeared to me plucking grapes, and dropping them playfully into my mouth; or catching water in the hollow of her hand, from the little cascade in our grotto, and I drank. But hark! drip, drip, and again drip! Is this madness still? No. There must be water oozing somewhere out of the sides of this detested hole. Where the treacherous wall is slimiest, where the green patches are brightest and widest spread on the clammy sides of my living sepulchre, there will be the spot to dig and to search.

Again the knife. Every blow gives a more dead and hollow sound. The chalk dislodged is certainly not moister; but the blade sticks fast into wood—the wood of a cask; something slowly begins to trickle down. It is brandy!

Brandy! shall I taste it? Yet, why not? I did; and soon for a time remembered nothing.

I retained a vivid and excited consciousness up to one precise moment, which might have been marked by a stop-watch, and then all outward things were shut out, as suddenly as if a lamp had been extinguished. A long and utter blank succeeded. I have no further recollection either of the duration of time, or of any bodily suffering. Had I died by alcoholic poison—and it is a miracle the brandy did not kill me—then would have been the end of my actual and conscious existence. My senses were dead. If what happened afterwards had occurred at that time, there would have been no story for you to listen to.

Once more, a burning thirst. Hunger had entirely passed away. I looked up, and all was dark; not even the stars or the cloudy sky were to be seen at the opening of my cavern. A shower of earth and heavy stones fell upon me as I lay. I still was barely awake and conscious, and a groan was the only evidence which escaped me that I had again recovered the use of my senses.

"Halloa! What's that down there?" said a voice, whose tone was familiar to me. I uttered a faint but frantic cry.

I heard a moment's whispering, and the hollow echo of departing footsteps, and then all was still again. The voice overhead once more addressed me.

"Courage, George; keep up your spirits! In two minutes I will come and haul you. Don't you know me?"

I then did know that it could be no other than my old rival, Richard Leroy. Before I could collect my thoughts, a light glimmered against one side of the well; and then, in the direction opposite the fallen table of flint, and just over it, Richard appeared, with a lantern in one hand, and a rope tied to a stick across it in the other.

"Have you strength enough left to sit upon this, and to hold by the rope while I haul you up?"

"I think I have," I said. I got the stick under me, and held by the rope to keep steady on my seat. Richard planted his feet firmly on the edge of his standing-place, and hauled me up. By a sleight of hand and an effort of strength, in which I was too weak to render him the least assistance, he landed me at the mouth of a subterranean gallery opening into the well. I could just see, on looking back, that if I had only maintained my position on the ledge of flint, and improved it a little, I might, by a daring and vigorous leap, have sprung to the entrance of this very gallery. But those ideas were now useless. I was so thoroughly worn out that I could scarcely stand, and an entreaty for water preceded even my expression of thanks.

"You shall drink your fill in one instant, and I am heartily glad to have helped you; but first let me mention one thing. It is understood that you keep my secret. You cannot leave this place—unless I blindfold you, which would be an insult—without learning the way to return to it; and, of

course, what you see along the galleries are to you nothing but shadows and dreams. Have I your promise?"

I was unable to make any other reply than to seize his hand, and burst into tears. How I got from the caverns to the face of the cliff, how thence to the beach, the secluded hamlet, and the sleeping village, does really seem to my memory like a vision. On the way across the downs, Leroy stopped once or twice, more for the sake of resting my aching limbs, than of taking breath or repose himself. During those intervals, he quietly remarked to me how prejudiced and unfair we had all of us been to him; that as for Charlotte, he considered her as a child, a little sister, almost even as a baby plaything. She was not the woman for him; he, for his part, liked a girl with a little more of the devil about her. No doubt he could have carried her off; and no doubt she would have loved him desperately a fortnight afterwards. But, when he had once got her, what should he have done with such a blue-eyed milk-and-water angel as that! Nothing serious to annoy us had ever entered his head. And my father ought not quite to forget the source of his own fortune, and hold himself aloof from his equals; although he might be lying quiet in harbor at present. Really, it was a joke, that, instead of eloping with the bride, he should be bringing home the eloped bridegroom!

I fainted when he carried me into my father's house, and I remembered no more than his temporary adieu. But afterwards, all went on slowly and surely. My father and Richard became good friends, and the old gentleman acquired such influence over him, that Leroy's "pleasure trips" soon became rare, and finally ceased altogether. At the last run, he brought a foreign wife over with him, and nothing besides—a Dutch woman of great beauty and accomplishments; who, as he said, was as fitting a helpmate for him, as Charlotte, he acknowledged, was for me. He also took a neighboring parish church and its appurtenances into favor, and settled down as a landsman within a few miles of us. And, if our families continue to go on in the friendly way they have done for the last few years, it seems likely that a Richard may conduct a Charlotte, to enter their names together in a favorite register book.

## THE COLONEL'S STORY.

UNTIL I was fifteen I lived at home with my widowed mother and two sisters. My mother was the widow of an officer, who was killed in one of the battles with Hyder Ali, and enjoyed a pension from the Indian Government. I was the youngest; and soon after my fifteenth birthday she died suddenly. My sisters went to India on the invitation of a distant relation of my mother; and I was sent to school, where I was very unhappy. You will, therefore, easily imagine with what pleasure I received a visit from a handsome jovial old gentleman, who told me that he was my father's elder half-brother; that they had been separated by a quarrel early in life, but that now, being a widower and childless, he had found me out, and determined to adopt me.

The truth was, the old man loved company; and that as his chief income—a large one—was derived from a mine, near which he lived, in a very remote part of the country, he was well pleased to have a young companion who looked like a gentleman, and could be useful as carver, cellar-keeper, and secretary.

Installed in his house, a room was assigned to me, and I had a servant, and a couple of excellent horses. He made me understand that I need give myself no further anxiety on the subject of my future, that I might abandon the idea of proceeding to India in the Company's service, where a cadetship had been secured to me; and that so long as I conformed to his ways, it was no matter whether I studied or not; in fact, it was no matter what I did.

Some time after becoming thus settled at Beechgrove Hall, my uncle's attacks of gout, in spite of the generous living he adopted as a precaution, became so severe, that he was unable to stir out except in a wheeled chair, and it was with difficulty that he was lifted occasionally into his carriage. The consequence was, that to me all his business naturally fell, and although he grumbled at losing my society and attention, he was obliged to send me to London to watch the progress of a canal bill, in which he was deeply interested. It was my first visit to London. I was well provided with introductions and with funds. My uncle's business occupied me in the morning, for I dreaded his displeasure too much to neglect it; but in the evenings I plunged into every amusement, with all the keen zest of novelty and youth.

I cannot say that up to that period I had never been in love. My uncle had twice seriously warned me that if I made a fool of myself for anything less than a large fortune, he would never forgive me. "If, Sir," he said, when, on the second occasion, he saw me blush and tremble—for I was too proud and too self-willed to bear patiently such control—"If, Sir, you like to make an ass of yourself for a pretty face, like Miss Willington, with her three brothers and five sisters, half of whom you'd have to keep, you may do it with your own money; you shall not do it with mine."

I told my only confidant, Dr. Creeleigh, of this; he answered me, "You have only about a hundred and twenty a year of your own from the estate you inherited from your father, and you are living with your horses and dogs at the rate of five hundred a year. How would you like to see your wife and children dressed and housed like the curate—poor Mr. Serge. Your uncle can't live for ever." The argument was enough for me, who had only found Clara Willington the best partner in a country dance. My time was not come.

My lodgings in London were in a large, old-fashioned house in Westminster—formerly the residence of a nobleman—which was a perfect caravanserai, in the number and variety of its inmates. The best rooms were let to Members of Parliament and persons like myself; but, in the upper floor, many persons of humbler means but genteel pretensions had rooms. Here, I frequently met on the stairs, carrying a roll of music, a tall, elegant female figure, dressed in black, and closely veiled; sometimes, when I had to step on one side, a slight bow was exchanged, but for several weeks that was all. At length my curiosity was piqued; the neat ankles, a small white hand, a dark curl peeping out of the veil, made me anxious to know more.

Enquiries discreetly applied to Mrs. Gough, the housekeeper, told me enough to make me wish to know still more. Her name was Laura Delacourt; not more than twenty or twenty-two years of age; she had lived four years previously with her husband in the best apartments in the house in great luxury for one winter. Mr. Delacourt was a Frenchman and a gambler; very handsome, and very dissipated; it seemed as if it was her fortune they were spending. Mrs. Gough said it was enough to make one's heart break



to see that young pretty creature sitting up in her ball dress when her husband had sent her home alone, and remained to play until daylight. They went away, and nothing more was heard of them until just before my arrival. About that time Madame Delacourt became very humble, had taken a room on the third floor; had only mentioned her husband to say he was dead, and now apparently lived by giving music lessons.

It would be too long a story to tell how, by making the old housekeeper my ambassador, by anonymous presents of fruit and game, by offering to take music lessons, and by professing to require large quantities of music copied, I made first the acquaintance, and then became the intimate friend of Madame Delacourt. While keeping me at a freezing distance, and insisting on always having present at our interviews a half-servant, half-companion, of that indescribable age, figure, and appearance that is only grown in France, she step by step confided to me her history. An English girl, born in France, the daughter of a war prisoner at Verdun, married to the very handsome Monsieur Delacourt, at sixteen, by a mother who was herself anxious to make a second marriage. In twelve months, Monsieur Delacourt had expended her small fortune, and deserted her for an opera dancer of twice her age.

All this, told with a charming accent in melancholy tones—she looking on me sadly with a face which for expression, I have never seen equalled—produced an impression which those only can understand who have been themselves young and in love.

For weeks this went on, without one sign of encouragement on her part, except that she allowed me to sit with her in the evenings, while her *bonne* faddled at some interminable work, and she sang—O! how divinely! She would receive no presents directly from me; but I sent them anonymously, and dresses and furniture and costly trifles and books reached her daily. I spoke at last; and then she stopped me with a cold faint smile, saying, "Cease! I must not listen to you." She pleaded her too recent widowhood, but I persevered; and, after a time, conquered.

She knew my small fortune and large expectations; she knew that our marriage must be a secret; but she was willing to live anywhere, and was well content to quit a life in which she had known so much trouble.

Before the session ended we were married in an obscure church in the City, with no one present but the clerk and the pew-opener. We spent a few following days at a small inn, in a fishing village. Then I had to leave town and carry out the plan I had proposed. I left my wife in lodgings, under an assumed name, at a town within forty

miles of our residence. I had some time previously persuaded my uncle to let me take a lease from Lord Mardall of some untouched mineral ground, on very favorable terms, in a wild, thinly-peopled district, which was only visited by the gentry for field sports. This afforded me an excuse for being away from home one or two days every week.

Not far from the mines was the remains of a forest, and coverts abounding in game. In a little sloping dell, one of Lord Mardall's ancestors had built a small shooting-lodge, and one of the keepers in charge had planted there fruit trees and ornamental trees, for which he had a taste, being the son of a gardener. On this wild nest, miles away from any other residence, I had fixed my mind. It was half in ruins, and there was no difficulty in obtaining possession. With money and workmen at my command, very soon a garden smiled, and a fountain bubbled at Orchard Spring; roses and climbing plants covered the steep hill side, and the small stone cottage was made, at a slight expense, a wonder of comfort. The cage being ready I brought my bird there. The first months were all joy, all happiness. My uncle only complained that I had lost my jovial spirits.

I counted every day until the day when I could mount my horse and set off for the new mines. Five and twenty miles to ride over a rough mountain road; two fords to cross, often swelled by winter rains; but day or night, moonlight or dark, I dashed along, pressing too often my willing horse with loose rein up and down steep hills; all lost in love and anxious thought I rode, until in the distance the plashing sound of the mountain torrent rolling over our garden cascade, told me I was near my darling.

My horse's footsteps were heard, and before I had passed the avenue the door flew open, the bright fire blazed out, and Laura came forward to receive me in her arms.

I had begged her to get everything she might require from London, and have it sent, to avoid all suspicion, to the nearest port, and then brought by her own servant, a country clown, with a horse and cart; and I had given her a cheque book, signed in blank. After a time I saw signs of extravagance; in furniture, in dress, but especially in jewels. I remonstrated gently, and was met first with tears, then sullen fits. I learned that Laura had a temper for which I was quite unprepared.

The ice was broken; no more pleasant holidays at Orchard Spring. The girl, once so humble, now assumed a haughty, jealous air; every word was a cause of offence; I never came when wanted, or stayed as long as I was required: half my time was spent in scenes of reproach, of tears, hysterics, lamentations; peace was only to be purchased

by some costly present. Our maid servant, a simple country girl, stood amazed; the meek angel had become a tigress. I loved her still, but feared her; yet even love began to fail before so much violence. A dreadful idea began slowly to intrude itself into my mind. Was she tired of me? Was the story of her life true? Had she ever loved me? The next time that I made up my banker's book, I was shocked to find that, in the short time since my last remonstrance, Laura had drawn a large sum of money. I lost no time in galloping to Orchard Spring. She was absent. Where was she? No one knew. Severe cross-examination brought out that she had been away two days; I had not been expected that week. I thought I should have choked.

In the midst I heard the steps of her horse. She came in and confronted me. Looking most beautiful and most demoniacal, she defied me; she threatened to expose me to my uncle; declared she had never loved me, but had taken me for a home. At length her frenzy rose to such a height, that she struck me. Then all the violent pent-up rage of my heart broke out. I know not what passed, until I found myself galloping furiously across the mountain ridge that divided the county. Obligated to slacken my pace in passing through a ford, some one spoke to me; how I answered I know not. Whatever it was, it was a mad answer.

I listened to nothing, and pressed on my weary steed until just before reaching the moorland, when, descending into a water-course, he fell on his head, throwing me over with such force, that for some time I lay senseless. I came to myself to find my poor horse standing over me dead lame. I led him on to the inn door, and knocked. It was midnight, and I was readily admitted. The landlord, when he saw me, started back with an exclamation of horror. My face and shirt were covered with blood.

Worn-out, bruised, and exhausted by fatigue and passion, I slept. I was rudely awakened, and found myself in the custody of two constables. Two mounted gamekeepers, and Lord Mardell had followed and traced me to the inn.

"On what charge?" I asked amazed.

"For murder," said Lord Mardell.

"The lady at Orchard Spring," said one of the gamekeepers.

I was examined before magistrates; but was unable to give any coherent answers; and was committed to the county jail. My uncle remitted me a sum of money for my defence, and desired never to see me again.

I will give you the description of my trial from the newspapers.

The prisoner had clandestinely married a lady of great beauty and unknown family, probably in station beneath himself, and

had placed her under an assumed name in a lonely cottage. After a season of affection, quarrels had broken out, which, as would be proved by the servant, had constantly increased in violence. On the last occasion when the unfortunate victim was seen alive by her servant, a quarrel of a most fearful description had commenced. It was something about money. The servant had been so much alarmed, that she had left the cottage and gone down to her mother's, a mile away over the hill, where she had previously been ordered to go to obtain some poultry. From something that passed, her mother would not allow her to return. It would then be proved that Lord Mardall, attracted by the howling of a dog, when out shooting the next morning, had entered the open door of the cottage, and had there found the prisoner's wife dead, with a severe fracture of the skull. The prisoner had been pursued, from some information as to his usual course, and found asleep in the chimney-corner of the Moor Inn, his clothes and shirt deeply stained with blood. It could be proved that he had washed his face and hands immediately on entering, and attributed the blood to the fall from his horse. But on examination no cuts were found on his person sufficient to cause such an effusion of blood.

But when Lord Mardall was called, he deposed to two facts which produced a great impression in favor of the prisoner. He saw the body at five o'clock, and it was scarcely cold. He had found in one of the victim's hands a lock of hair, which she had evidently torn from her assailant in her struggles; which had been desperate. He had sealed it up, and never let it out of his possession. The nails of her other hand were broken, and were marked with blood. She had no rings on either of her hands, though she was in the habit of wearing a great number; there were marks of rings, and of one which seemed to have been violently torn off. A packet of plate had been found on the kitchen table, a knife, and a loaf marked with blood.

Counsel were not allowed to speak for the defence in those days, and the prisoner was not in a condition to speak on the evidence against him. Witnesses for the defence were called, who proved that the lady wore frequently certain peculiar bracelets. The prisoner, who seemed stupified by his emotions, declined to say anything; but his counsel asked the maid-servant, and also the farmer who occasionally sold meat to Orchard Spring, if they should know the rings and bracelets if they saw them.

He then called Richard Perkins, jailor of the county prison, and asked him these questions:

"Had you any prisoner committed about the same time as the prisoner at the bar?"

"I had a man called Hay-making Dick, for horse-stealing, the day after the discovery of the murder."

"Was it a valuable horse?"

"No: it was a mare, blind of one eye, very old, and with a large fen spavin. I knew her well; used to drive her in the goal cart; but when warm, she was faster than anything about."

"Do you suppose Hay-making Dick took the mare to sell?"

"Certainly not. She would not fetch a crown except to those that knew her. No doubt he had been up to some mischief, and wanted to get out of the county, only luckily he rode against the blacksmith that owned the mare and was taken."

The judge thought these questions irrelevant; but, after some conversation, permitted the examination to go on.

"Has Perkins searched the prisoner, and has he found anything of value?"

The gaoler produced two bracelets, four rings—one a diamond hoop, one a seal ring—and a canvass wheat-bag containing gold, with several French coins. On one of the bracelets was engraved "Charles to Laura," and a date. In answer to another question, he had found several severe scratches on Dick's face, made apparently by nails, which he declared had been done in an up and down fight at Broad-green Fair. Also a severe raw scar on his left temple, as if hair had been pulled out.

At this stage of the proceedings, by order of the judge, the prisoner Dick was brought up. The lock of hair taken by Lord Mar-

dall from the murdered lady's hand was compared with Dick's head. It matched exactly, although Dick's hair had been cut short and washed. Then Mr. Monley gave evidence, that when he met the prisoner, on the night of the murder, immediately after he had left the cottage, there certainly was no blood on his face or dress. The landlord of the Moon Inn was called, and deposed, that he found the corn, placed before the prisoner's horse, uneaten and much stained with blood. On examining the horse's tongue, he saw that it had been half-bitten off in the fall the animal had suffered. No doubt the blood had dripped over the young Squire.

It was a bright moonlight night shining in the prisoner's face.

The judge summed up for an acquittal, and the jury gave a verdict of Not Guilty, without leaving the box.

A week after, Hay-making Dick made an attempt to break out of prison, in which he knocked out the brains of a turnkey with his irons. He was tried and condemned for this, and when hope of escape was gone, he called a favorite turnkey to him and said, "Bill I killed the Frenchwoman. I knew she always had plenty of money and jewels, and I watched my opportunity to get 'em."

Thus ends the newspaper reports. My uncle died of gout in his stomach on the day of the trial, and died almost insolvent. By Lord Mardall's influence I received an appointment from the East India Company, and afterwards a commission in their irregular service.

## THE SCHOLAR'S STORY.

I PERCEIVE a general fear on the part of this pleasant company, that I am going to burst into black-letter, and beguile the time by being as dry as ashes. No, there is no such fear, you can assure me? I am glad to hear it; but I thought there was.

At any rate, both to relieve your minds and to place myself beyond suspicion, I will say at once that my story is a ballad. It was taken down, as I am going to repeat it, seventy-one years ago, by the mother of the person who communicated it to M. Villemarque when he was making his collection of Breton Ballads. It is slightly confirmed by the chronicles and Ecclesiastical Acts of the time; but no more of them or you really will suspect me. It runs, according to my version, thus.

Sole child of her house, a lovely maid,  
In the lordly halls of Rohan played.

Played till thirteen, when her sire was bent  
To see her wed; and she gave consent.

And many a lord of high degree  
Came suing her chosen knight to be;

But amongst them all there pleased her none  
Save the noble Count Mathieu alone;

Lord of the Castle of Tongoli,  
A princely knight of Italy.

To him so courteous, true and brave,  
Her heart the maiden freely gave.

Three years since the day they first were wed  
In peace and in bliss away had sped,



When tidings came on the winds abroad,  
That all were to take the cross of God.

Then spake the Count, like a noble knight:  
"Aye first in birth should be first in fight!"

"And since to this Paynim war I must,  
Dear cousin, I leave thee here in trust.

"My wife and my child I leave to thee;  
Guard them, good clerk, as thy life for me!"

Early next morn, from his castle gate,  
As rode forth the knight in bannered state,

Down the marble steps, all full of fears,  
The lady hied her with moans and tears—

The loving, sweet lady, sobbing wild—  
And laid on her breast her baby child.

She ran to her lord with breathless speed,  
As backward he reigned his fiery steed;

She caught and she clasped him round the knee;  
She wept and she prayed him piteously:

"Oh stay with me, stay! my lord, my love!  
Go not, I beg, by the saints above;

"Leave me not here alone, I pray,  
To weep on your baby's face away!"

The knight was touched with her sad despair,  
And fondly gazed on her face so fair;

And stretched out his hand, and stooping low,  
Raised her up straight to his saddle-bow;

And held her pressed to his bosom then,  
And kissed her o'er and o'er agen.

"Come, dry these tears, my little Joan;  
A single year will soon be flown!"

His baby dear in his arms he took,  
And looked on him with a proud, fond look:

"My boy, when thou'rt a man," said he,  
Wilt ride to the wars along with me?"

Then away he spurred across the plain,  
And old and young they wept amain:

Both rich and poor, wept every one;  
But that same clerk—ah! he wept none,

# II.

The treacherous clerk one morning tide,  
With artful speeches the lady plied:

"Lo! ended now is that single year,  
And ended too is the war I hear;

"But yet, thy lord to return to thee,  
Would seem in no haste at a." to le.

"Now, ask of your heart, my lady dear,  
Is there no other might please it here?"

"Need wives still keep themselves unwed,  
E'en though their husbands should not be dead?"

"Silence! thou wretched clerk!" cried she,  
"Thy heart is filled full of sin, I see.

"When my lord returns, if I whisper him,  
Thou know'st he'll tear thee limb from limb!"

As soon as the clerk thus answered she  
He stole to the kennel secretly.

He called to the hound so swift and true,  
The hound that his lord loved best, he knew

It came to his call—leapt up in play;  
One gash in the throat, and dead it lay.

As trickled the blood from out the throat,  
He dipped in that red ink and wrote:

A letter he wrote with a liar's heed,  
And sent it straight to the camp with speed.

And these were the words the letter bore:  
"Dear lord your wife she is fretting sore,

"Fretting and grieving, your wife so dear,  
For a sad mischance befallen here.

"Chasing the doe on the mountain-side,  
Thy beautiful greyhound burst and died."

The Count so guileless then answer made,  
And thus to his faithless cousin said:

"Now bid my own little wife, I pray,  
To fret not for this mischance one day.

"My hound is dead—well! money have I  
Another, when I come back, to buy.

"Yet she'd better not hunt agen,  
For hunters are oft but wildish men."

# III.

The miscreant clerk once more he came,  
As she wept in her bower, to the peerless dame

"O lady, with weeping night and day,  
Your beauty is fading fast away."

"And what care I though it fading be,  
When my own dear lord comes not to me?"

"Thy own dear lord has, I fancy, wed  
Another ere this, or else he's dead.

"The Moorish maidens though dark are fair  
And gold in plenty have got to spare;

"The Moorish chiefs on the battle plain  
Thousands as valiant as he have slain

"If he's wed another—Oh curse, not fret;  
Or, if he's dead—why straight forget!"

"If he's wed another I'll die," she said;  
"And I'll die likewise, if he be dead!"

"In case one chances to lose the key,  
No need for burning the box, I see.

"Twere wiser, if I might speak my mind,  
A new and a better key to find."

"Now hold, thou wretched clerk, thy tongue,  
'Tis foul with lewdness—more rotten than dung."

As soon as the clerk thus answered she,  
He stole to the stable secretly,

He looked at his lord's own favorite steed,  
Unmatched for beauty, for strength and speed;

White as an egg, and more smooth to touch  
Light as a bird, and for fire none such;

On nought had she fed since she was born,  
Save fine chopped heath and the best of corn.

Awhile the bonny white mare he eyed,  
Then struck his dirk in her velvet side;

And when the bonny white mare lay dead,  
Again to the Count he wrote and said :

"Of a fresh mischance I now send word,  
But let it not vex thee much, dear lord ;

"Hasting back from a revel last night,  
My lady rode on thy favorite white—

"So hotly rode, it stumbled and fell,  
And broke both legs, as I grieve to tell."

The Count then answered, "Ah ! woe is me  
My bonny white mare no more to see ?

"My mare she has killed ; my hound killed too ;  
Good cousin, now give her counsel true.

"Yet scold her not either ; but say from me,  
To no more revels at night must she.

"Not horses' legs alone, I fear,  
But wifely vows may be broken there !"

## IV.

The clerk a few days let pass and then  
Back to the charge returned agen.

"Lady, now yield, or you die !" said he :  
"Choose which you will—choose speedily !"

"Ten thousand deaths would I rather die,  
Than shame upon me my God should cry !"

The clerk when he saw he nought might gain,  
No more could his smothered wrath contain ;

So soon as those words had left her tongue,  
His dagger right at her head he flung.

But swift her white angel, hovering nigh,  
Turned it aside as it flashed her by.

The lady straight to her chamber flew,  
And bolt and bar behind her drew.

The clerk his dagger snatched up and shook,  
And grinned with angry ban-dog's look.

Down the broad stairs in his rage came he,  
Two steps at a time, two steps and three.

Then on to the nurse's room he crept,  
Where softly the winsome baby slept—

Softly, and sweetly, and all alone ;  
One arm from the silken cradle thrown—

One little round arm just o'er it laid,  
Folded the other beneath his head ;

His little white breast—ah ! hush ! be still !  
Poor mother, go now and weep your fill !

Away to his room the clerk then sped,  
And wrote a letter in black and red ;

In haste, post haste, to the Count wrote he ;  
"There be need, dear lord, sore need of thee !

"Oh speed now, speed to thy castle back,  
For all runs riot, and runs to wrack.

"Thy hound is killed, and thy mare is killed,  
But not for these with grief I'm filled,

"Nor is it for these that thou wilt care ;  
Thy darling is dead ! thy son, thy heir !

"The sow she seized and devoured him all,  
While thy wife was dancing at the ball ;

"Dancing there with the miller gay,  
Her young gallant, as the people say."

## V.

That letter came to the valiant knight,  
Hastening home from the Paynim fight ;

With trumpet sound, from the Eastern strand  
Hastening home to his own dear land.

So soon as he read the missive through,  
Fearful to see his anger grew.

The scroll in his mailed hand he took,  
And crumpled it up with furious look ;

To bits with his teeth he tore the sheet,  
And spat them out at his horse's feet.

"Now quick to Brittany, quick, my men,  
The homes that you love to see again !

"Thou loitering squire ! ride yet more quick,  
Or my lance shall teach thee how to prick !"

But when he stood at his castle gate,  
Three lordly blows he struck it straight ;

Three angry blows he struck thereon,  
Which made them tremble every one.

The clerk he heard, and down he hied,  
And opened at once the portal wide,

"Oh cursed cousin, that this should be !  
Did I not trust my wife to thee ?"

His spear down the traitor's throat he drove,  
Till out at his back the red point clove.

Then up he rushed to the bridal bower,  
Where drooped his lady like some pale flower.

And ere she could speak a single word,  
She fell at his feet beneath his sword.

## VI.

"O holy priest ! now tell to me  
What didst thou up at the castle see ?"

"I saw a grief and a terror more  
Than ever I saw on earth before.

"I saw a martyr give up her breath,  
And her slayer sorrowing e'en to death."

"O holy priest ! now tell to me  
What didst thou down at the crossway see ?"

"I saw a corpse that all mangled lay,  
And the dogs and ravens made their prev "

"O holy priest ! now tell to me  
What didst thou next in the churchyard see "

"By a new-made grave, in soft moonlight,  
I saw a fair lady clothed in white ;

"Nursing a little child on her knee—  
A dark red wound on his breast had he.

"A noble hound lay couched at her right,  
A steed at her left of bonniest white ;

"The first a gash in his throat had wide,  
And this as deep a stab in his side.  
"They raised their heads to the lady's knee,  
And they licked their soft bands tenderly,  
"She gently patted their necks, the while  
Smiling, though stilly, a fair sweet smile.

"The child, as it fain its love would speak,  
Caressed and fondled its mother's cheek,  
"But down went the moon then silently,  
And my eyes no more their forms could see;  
"But I heard a bird from out the skies  
Warbling a song of Paradise!"

## NOBODY'S STORY.

HE lived on the bank of a mighty river, broad and deep, which was always silently rolling on to a vast undiscovered ocean. It had rolled on, ever since the world began. It had changed its course sometimes, and turned into new channels, leaving its old ways dry and barren; but it had ever been upon the flow, and ever was to flow until Time shall be no more. Against its strong, unfathomable stream, nothing made head. No living creature, no flower, no leaf, no particle of animate or inanimate existence, ever strayed back from the undiscovered ocean. The tide of the river set resistlessly towards it; and the tide never stopped, any more than the earth stops in its circling round the sun.

He lived in a busy place, and he worked very hard to live. He had no hope of ever being rich enough to live a month without hard work, but he was quite content, God knows, to labor with a cheerful will. He was one of an immense family, all of whose sons and daughters gained their daily bread by daily work, prolonged from their rising up betimes until their lying down at night. Beyond this destiny he had no prospect, and he sought none.

There was over-much drumming, trumpeting, and speechmaking, in the neighborhood where he dwelt; but he had nothing to do with that. Such clash and uproar came from the Bigwig family, at the unaccountable proceedings of which race he marvelled much. They set up the strongest statues, in iron, marble, bronze, and brass, before his door; and darkened his house with the legs and tails of uncouth images of horses. He wondered what it all meant, smiled in a rough good-humored way he had, and kept at his hard work.

The Bigwig family (composed of all the noisiest) had undertaken to save him the trouble of thinking for himself, and to manage him and his affairs. "Why truly," said he, "I have little time upon my hands; and if you will be so good as to take care of me in return for the money I pay over"—for the Bigwig family were not above his money—"I shall be relieved and

much obliged, considering that you know best." Hence the drumming, trumpeting, and speechmaking, and the ugly images of horses which he was expected to fall down and worship.

"I don't understand all this," said he, rubbing his furrowed brow confusedly. "But it *has* a meaning, maybe, if I could find it out."

"It means," returned the Bigwig family, suspecting something of what he said, "honor and glory in the highest, to the highest merit."

"Oh!" said he. And he was glad to hear that.

But, when he looked among the images in iron, marble, bronze, and brass, he failed to find a rather meritorious countryman of his, once the son of a Warwickshire wool-dealer, or any single countryman whomsoever, of that kind. He could find none of the men whose knowledge had rescued him and his children from terrific and disfiguring disease, whose boldness has raised his forefathers from the condition of serfs, whose wise fancy had opened a new and high existence to the humblest, whose skill had filled the working man's world with accumulated wonders. Whereas, he did find others whom he knew no good of, and even others whom he knew much ill of.

"Humph!" said he. "I don't quite understand it."

So, he went home, and sat down by his fire-side to get it out of his mind.

Now, his fire-side was a bare one, all hemmed in by blackened streets; but it was a precious place to him. His children, stunted in their growth, bore traces of unwholesome nurture; but they had beauty in his sight. Above all other things, it was an earnest desire of this man's soul that his children should be taught. "If I am sometimes misled," said he, "for want of knowledge, at least let them know better, and avoid my mistakes. If it is hard to me to reap the harvest of pleasure and instruction that is stored in books, let it be easier to them."

But the Bigwig family broke into violent



family quarrels concerning what it was lawful to teach to this man's children. Some of the family insisted on such a thing being primary and indispensable above all other things; and others of the family insisted on such another thing being primary and indispensable above all other things; and the Bigwig family, rent into factions, wrote pamphlets, held convocations, delivered charges, orations, and all varieties of discourses; impounded one another in courts Lay and courts Ecclesiastical; threw dirt, exchanged pummelings, and fell together by the ears in unintelligible animosity. Meanwhile, this man, in his short evening snatches at his fire-side, saw the demon Ignorance arise there, and take his children to itself. He saw his daughter perverted into a heavy, slatternly drudge; he saw his son go moping down the ways of low sensuality, to brutality and crime; he saw the dawning light of intelligence in the eyes of his babies so changing into cunning and suspicion, that he could have rather wished them idiots.

"I don't understand this any the better," said he; "but I think it cannot be right. Nay, by the clouded Heaven above me, I protest against this as my wrong!"

Becoming peaceable again (for his passion was usually short-lived, and his nature kind), he looked about him on his Sundays and holidays, and he saw how much monotony and weariness there was, and thence how drunkenness arose with all its train of ruin. Then he appealed to the Bigwig family, and said, "We are a laboring people, and I have a glimmering suspicion in me that laboring people of whatever condition were made—by a higher intelligence than yours, as I poorly understand it—to be in need of mental refreshment and recreation. See what we fall into, when we rest without it. Come! Amuse me harmlessly, show me something, give me an escape!"

But here the Bigwig family fell into a state of uproar absolutely deafening. When some few voices were faintly heard, proposing to show him the wonders of the world, the greatness of creation, the mighty changes of time, the workings of nature and the beauties of art—to show him these things, that is to say, at any period of his life when he could look upon them—there arose among the Bigwigs such roaring and raving, such pulpitng and petitioning, such maundering and memorialising, such name-calling and dirt-throwing, such a shrill wind of parliamentary questioning and feeble replying—where "I dare not" waited on "I would"—that the poor fellow stood aghast, staring wildly around.

"Have I provoked all this," said he, with his hands to his affrighted ears, "by what was meant to be an innocent request, plainly arising out my familiar experience, and the

common knowledge of all men who choose to open their eyes? I don't understand, and I am not understood. What is to come of such things?"

He was bending over his work, often asking himself the question, when the news began to spread that a pestilence had appeared among the laborers, and was slaying them by thousands. Going forth to look about him, he soon found this to be true. The dying and the dead were mingled in the close and tainted houses among which his life was passed. New poison was distilled into the always murky, always sickening air. The robust and the weak, old age and infancy, the father and the mother, all were stricken down alike.

What means of fight had he? He remained where he was, and saw those who were dearest to him die. A kind preacher came to him, and would have said some prayers to soften his heart in his gloom, but he replied:

"O what avails it, missionary, to come to me, a man condemned to residence in this fetid place, where every sense becomes a torment, and where every minute of my numbered days is new mire added to the heap under which I lie oppressed! But give me my first glimpse of Heaven, through a little of its light and air; give me pure water; help me to be clean; lighten this heavy atmosphere and heavy life, in which our spirits sink, and we become the indifferent and callous creatures you too often see us; gently and kindly take the bodies of those who die among us, out of the small room where we grow to be so familiar with the awful change that even its sanctity is lost to us; and, Teacher, then I will hear—none know better than you, how willingly—of Him whose thoughts were so much with the poor, and who had compassion for all human sorrow!"

He was at his work again, solitary and sad, when his Master came and stood near to him, dressed in black. He, also, had suffered heavily. His young wife, his beautiful and good young wife, was dead; so, too, his only child.

"Master, 'tis hard to bear—I know it—but be comforted. I would give you comfort, if I could.

The Master thanked him from his heart, but said he, "O you laboring men! The calamity began among you. If you had but lived more healthily and decently, I should not be the widowed and bereft mourner that I am this day."

"Master," returned the other, shaking his head, "I have begun to understand a little that most calamities will come from us, as this one did, and that none will stop at our poor doors, until we are united with that great squabbling family yonder, to do the things that are right. We cannot live

healthily and decently, unless they who undertook to manage us provide the means. We cannot be instructed, unless they will teach us; we cannot be rationally amused, unless they will amuse us; we cannot but have some false gods of our own, while they set up so many of theirs in all the public places. The evil consequences of imperfect instruction, the evil consequences of pernicious neglect, the evil consequences of unnatural restraint and the denial of humanizing enjoyments, will all come from us, and none of them will stop with us. They will spread far and wide. They always do; they always have done—just like the pestilence. I understand so much, I think, at last."

But the Master said again, "O you laboring men! how seldom do we ever hear of you, except in connection with some trouble!"

"Master," he replied, "I am Nobody, and little likely to be heard of (nor yet much wanted to be heard of perhaps), except when there is some trouble. But it never begins with me, and it can never end with me. As sure as Death, it comes down to me, and it goes up from me."

There was so much reason in what he said, that the Bigwig family, getting wind of it, and being horribly frightened by the late desolation, resolved to unite with him to do the things that were right—at all events, so far as the said things were associated with the direct prevention, humanly

speaking, of another pestilence. But, as their fear wore off, which it soon began to do, they resumed their falling out among themselves, and did nothing. Consequently the scourge appeared again—low down as before, and spread avengingly upward as before, and carried off vast numbers of the brawlers. But not a man among them ever admitted, if in the least degree he ever perceived, that he had anything to do with it.

So Nobody lived and died in the old, old, old way; and this, in the main, is the whole of Nobody's story.

Had he no name, you ask? Perhaps it was Legion. It matters little what his name was. Let us call him Legion.

If you were ever in the Belgian villages near the field of Waterloo, you will have seen, in some quiet little church, a monument erected by faithful companions in arms to the memory of Colonel A, Major B, Captains C, D and E, Lieutenants F and G, Ensigns H, I and J, seven non-commissioned officers, and one hundred and thirty rank and file, who fell in the discharge of their duty on the memorable day. The story of Nobody is the story of the rank and file of the earth. They bear their share of the battle; they have their part in the victory; they fall; they leave no name but in the mass. The march of the proudest of us leads to the dusty way by which they go. O! Let us think of them this year at the Christmas fire, and not forget them when it is burnt out.





# HARD TIMES.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!"

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school-room, and the speaker's square fore finger emphasised his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellars in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall.—The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was,—all helped the emphasis.

"In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!"

The speaker and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.

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## CHAPTER II.

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir—peremptorily Thomas—Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to

weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. You might hope to get some other nonsensical belief into the head of George Gradgrind, or Augustus Gradgrind, or John Gradgrind, or Joseph Gradgrind, (all suppositious, non-existent persons,) but into the head of Thomas Gradgrind—no, sir.

In such terms Mr. Gradgrind always mentally introduced himself, whether to his private circle of acquaintance, or to the public in general. In such terms, no doubt, substituting the words "boys and girls," for "sir," Thomas Gradgrind now presented Thomas Gradgrind to the little pitchers before him, who were to be filled so full of facts.

Indeed, as he eagerly sparkled at them from the cellars before mentioned, he seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge. He seemed a galvanising apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away.

"Girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger, "I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?"

"Sissy Jupe, sir," explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtsying.

"Sissy is not a name," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia."

"It's father as calls me Sissy, sir," returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsy.

"Then he has no business to do it," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Tell him he mustn't, Cecilia Jupe. Let me see. What is your father?"

"He belongs to the horse-riding, if you please, sir."

Mr. Gradgrind frowned, and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.

"We don't want to know anything about that here. You mustn't tell us about that, here. Your father breaks horses, don't he?"

"If you please sir, when they can get any to break, they do break horses in the ring, sir."

"You mustn't tell us about the ring here. Very well, then. Describe your father as a horsebreaker. He doctors sick horses, I dare say?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Very well, then. He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier and horsebreaker. Give me your definition of a horse."

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

"Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. "Girl number twenty possessed of no facts in reference to one of the commonest of animals! Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours."

The square finger, moving here and there, lighted suddenly on Bitzer, perhaps because he chanced to sit in the same ray of sunlight which, darting in at one of the bare windows of the intensely whitewashed room, irradiated Sissy. For, the boys and girls sat on the face of the inclined plane in two compact bodies, divided up the centre by a narrow interval; and Sissy, being at the corner of a row on the sunny side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end. But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired, that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous color from the sun when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face.

His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white.

"Bitzer," said Thomas Gradgrind. "Your definition of a horse."

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely: twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

"Now girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind. "You know what a horse is."

She curtsied again, and would have blushed deeper, if she could have blushed deeper than she had blushed all this time. Bitzer, after rapidly blinking at Thomas Gradgrind with both eyes at once, and so catching the light upon his quivering ends of lashes that they looked like the antennæ of busy insects, put his knuckles to his freckled forehead, and sat down again.

The third gentleman now stepped forth. A mighty man at cutting and drying, he was; a government officer; in his way (and in most other people's too), a professed pugilist; always in training, always with a system to force down the general throat like a bolus, always to be heard of at the bar of his little Public-office, ready to fight all England. To continue in fistic phraseology, he had a genius for coming up to the scratch, wherever and

whatever it was, and proving himself an ugly customer. He would go in and damage any subject whatever with his right, follow up with his left, stop, exchange, counter, bore his opponent (he always fought all England) to the ropes, and fall upon him neatly. He was certain to knock the wind out of common-sense, and render that unlucky adversary deaf to the call of time. And he had it in charge from high authority to bring about the great public-office Millenium, when Commissioners should reign upon earth.

"Very well," said this gentleman, briskly smiling, and folding his arms. "That's a horse. Now, let me ask you, girls and boys. Would you paper a room with representations of horses?"

After a pause, one half of the children cried in chorus, "Yes, sir!" Upon which the other half, seeing in the gentleman's face that Yes was wrong, cried out in chorus "No, sir!"—as the custom is in these examinations.

"Of course, No. Why wouldn't you?"

A pause. One corpulent slow boy, with a wheezy manner of breathing, ventured the answer, "Because he wouldn't paper a room at all, but would paint it."

"You *must* paper it," said the gentleman, rather warmly.

"You *must* paper it," said Thomas Gradgrind, "whether you like it or not. Don't tell us you wouldn't paper it. What do you mean, boy?"

"I'll explain to you, then," said the gentleman, after another and a dismal pause, "why you wouldn't paper a room with representations of horses. Do you ever see horses walking up and down the sides of rooms in reality—in fact? Do you?"

"Yes, sir!" from one half. "No sir!" from the other.

"Of course no," said the gentleman with an indignant look at the wrong half. "Why, then, you are not to see anywhere, what you don't see in fact; you are not to have anywhere, what you don't have in fact. What is called Taste, is only another name for Fact."

Thomas Gradgrind nodded his approbation.

"This is a new principle, a discovery, a great discovery," said the gentleman. "Now, I'll try you again. Suppose you were going to carpet a room. Would you use a carpet having a representation of flowers upon it?"

There being a general conviction by this time that "No, sir," was always the right answer to this gentleman, the chorus of No was very strong. Only a few feeble stragglers said Yes; among them Sissy Jupe.

"Girl number twenty," said the gentleman, smiling in the calm strength of knowledge.

Sissy blushed, and stood up.

"So you would carpet your room—or your husband's room, if you were a grown woman, and had a husband—with representations of flowers, would you?" said the gentleman. "Why would you?"

"If you please, sir, I am very fond of flowers," returned the girl.

"And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them, and have people walking over them with heavy boots?"

"It wouldn't hurt them, sir. They wouldn't crush and wither, if you please, sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy——"

"Ay, ay, ay! But you musn't fancy," cried the gentleman, quite elated by coming so happily to his point. "That's it! You are never to fancy."

"You are not, Mary Jupe," Thomas Gradgrind solemnly repeated, "to do anything of that kind."

"Fact, fact, fact!" said the gentleman. And "Fact, fact, fact!" repeated Thomas Gradgrind.

"You are to be in all things regulated and governed," said the gentleman, "by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have, in any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact. You don't walk upon flowers in fact; you cannot be allowed to walk upon flowers in carpets. You don't find that foreign birds and butterflies come and perch upon your crockery; you cannot be permitted to paint foreign birds and butterflies upon your crockery. You never meet with quadrupeds going up and down walls; you must not have quadrupeds represented upon walls. You must use," said the gentleman, "for all these purposes, combinations and modifications (in primary colors) of mathematical figures which are susceptible of proof and demonstration. This is the new discovery. This is fact. This is taste."

The girl curtsied, and sat down. She was very young, and she looked as if she were frightened by the matter of fact prospect the world afforded.

"Now, if Mr. M'Choakumchild," said the gentleman, "will proceed to give his first lesson here, Mr. Gradgrind, I shall be happy, at your request, to observe his mode of procedure."

Mr. Gradgrind was much obliged. "Mr. M'Choakumchild, we only wait for you."

"So Mr. M'Choakumchild began in his best manner. He and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters, had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs. He had been put through an immense variety of paces, and had answered volumes of head-breaking questions. Orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody, biography, astronomy, geography, and general cosmography, the sciences of compound proportion, algebra, land surveying and levelling, vocal music, and drawing from models, were all at the ends

of his ten chilled fingers. He had worked his stoney way into Her Majesty's most Honorable Privy Council's Schedule B, and had taken the bloom off the higher branches of mathematics and physical science, French, German, Latin, and Greek. He knew all about all the Water Sheds of all the World (whatever they are,) and all the histories of all the peoples, and all the names of all the rivers and mountains, and all the productions, manners and customs of all the countries, and all their boundaries and bearings on the two and thirty points of the compass. Ah, rather overdone, M'Choakumchild. If he had only learnt a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more!

He went to work in this preparatory lesson, not unlike Morgiana in the Forty Thieves: looking into all the vessels ranged before him, one after another, to see what they contained. Say, good M'Choakumchild. When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by and by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within—or sometimes only maim him and distort him!

### CHAPTER III

Mr. Gradgrind walked homeward from the school, in a state of considerable satisfaction. It was his school, and he intended it to be a model. He intended every child in it to be a model—just as the young Gradgrinds were all models.

There were five young Gradgrinds, and they were models every one. They had been lectured at, from their tenderest years; coursed, like little hares. Almost as soon as they could run alone, they had been made to run to the lecture-room. The first object with which they had an association, or of which they had a remembrance, was a large black-board with a dry Ogre chalking ghastly white figures on it.

Not that they knew, by name or nature, anything about an Ogre. Fact forbid! I only use the word to express a monster in a lecturing castle, with Heaven knows how many heads manipulated into one, taking childhood captive, and dragging it into gloomy statistical dens by the hair.

No little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon; it was up in the moon before it could speak distinctly. No little Gradgrind had ever learnt the silly jingle, Twinkle twinkle, little star; how I wonder what you are; it had never known wonder on the subject, having at five years old dissected the Great Bear like a Professor Owen, and driven Charles's Wain like a locomotive engine-driver. No little Gradgrind had ever associated a cow in a field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn who tossed the dog who worried the cat who killed the rat who ate the malt, or with that yet more famous cow who swallowed Tom Thumb; it had never heard of



these celebrities, and had only been introduced to a cow as a graminivorous ruminating quadruped with several stomachs.

To his matter of fact home, which was called Stone Lodge, Mr. Gradgrind directed his steps. He had virtually retired from the wholesale hardware trade before he built Stone Lodge, and was now looking about for a suitable opportunity of making an arithmetical figure in Parliament. Stone Lodge was situated on a moor within a mile or two of a great town—called Coketown in the present faithful guide-book.

A very regular feature on the face of the country, Stone Lodge was. Not the least disguise toned down or shaded off that uncompromising fact in the landscape. A great square house, with a heavy portico darkening the principal windows, as its master's heavy brows overshadowed his eyes. A calculated, cast up, balanced and proved house. Six windows on this side of the door, six on that side; a total of twelve in this wing, a total of twelve in the other wing; four and twenty carried over to the back. A lawn and garden and an infant avenue, all ruled straight like a botanical account-book. Gas and ventilation, drainage and water-service, all of the prime quality. Iron clamps and girders, fireproof from top to bottom; mechanical lifts for the housemaids, with all their brushes and brooms; everything that heart could desire.

Everything? Well I suppose so. The little Gradgrinds had cabinets in various departments of science too. They had a little conchological cabinet, and a little metallurgical cabinet, and a little mineralogical cabinet; and the specimens were all arranged and labelled; and the bits of stone and ore looked as though they might have been broken from their parent substances by those tremendously hard instruments, their own names; and, to paraphrase the idle legend of Peter Piper, who had never found his way into *their* nursery, if the little greedy Gradgrinds grasped at more than this, what was it for good gracious goodness sake, that the greedy little Gradgrinds grasped at!

Their father walked on in a hopeful and satisfied frame of mind. He was an affectionate father, after his manner; but he would probably have described himself (if he had been put, like Sissy Jupe, upon a definition) as "an eminently practical" father. He had a particular pride in the phrase eminently practical, which was considered to have a special application to him. Whatsoever the public meeting held in Coketown, and whatsoever the subject of such meeting, some Coketowner was sure to seize the occasion of alluding to his eminently practical friend Gradgrind. This always pleased the eminently practical friend. He knew it to be his due, but his due was acceptable.

He had reached the neutral ground upon the outskirts of the town, which was neither town nor country, and yet was either spoiled, when his ears were invaded by the sound of

music. The clashing and banging band attached to the horse-riding establishment which had there set up its rest in a wooden pavilion, was in full bray. A flag, floating from the summit of the temple, proclaimed to mankind that it was "Sleary's Horse-riding" which claimed their suffrages. Sleary himself, a stout modern statue with a money-box at its elbow, in an ecclesiastical niche of early Gothic architecture, took the money. Miss Josephine Sleary, as some very long and very narrow strips of printed bills announced, was then inaugurating the entertainments with her graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower-act. Among the other pleasing but always strictly moral wonders which must be seen to be believed, Signor Jupe was that afternoon to "elucidate the diverting accomplishments of his highly trained performing dog Merrylegs." He was also to exhibit "his astounding feat of throwing seventy-five hundred weight in rapid succession backhanded over his head, thus forming a fountain of solid iron in mid air, a feat never before attempted in this or any other country; and which, having elicited such rapturous plaudits from enthusiastic throngs, it cannot be withdrawn." The same Signor Jupe was to "enliven the varied performances at frequent intervals with his chaste Shakspearean quips and retorts." Lastly, he was to wind them up by appearing in his favorite character of Mr. William Button, of Tooley street, in "the highly novel and laughable hippocomedietta of The Tailor's Journey to Brentford."

Thomas Gradgrind took no heed of these trivialities of course, but passed on as a practical man ought to pass on, either brushing the noisy insects from his thoughts, or consigning them to the House of Correction. But, the turning of the road took him by the back of the booth, and at the back of the booth a number of children were congregated in a number of stealthy attitudes, striving to peep in at the hidden glories of the place.

This brought him to a stop. "Now, to think of these vagabonds," said he, "attracting the young rabble from a model school!"

A space of stunted grass and dry rubbish being between him and the young rabble, he took his eyeglass out of his waistcoat to look for any child he knew by name, and might order off. Phenomenon almost incredible though distinctly seen, what did he then behold but his own metallurgical Louisa peeping with all her might through a hole in a deal board, and his own mathematical Thomas abasing himself on the ground to catch but a hoof of the graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower act!

Dumb with amazement, Mr. Gradgrind crossed to the spot where his family was thus disgraced, laid his hand upon each erring child, and said:

"Louisa!! Thomas!!"

Both rose, red and disconcerted. But, Louisa looked at her father with more boldness than

Thomas did. Indeed, Thomas did not look at him, but gave himself up to be taken home like a machine.

"In the name of wonder, idleness, and folly!" said Mr. Gradgrind, leading each away by a hand; "what do you do here?"

"Wanted to see what it was like," returned Louisa shortly.

"What it was like?"

"Yes, father."

There was an air of jaded sullenness in them both, and particularly in the girl; yet, struggling through the dissatisfaction of her face, there was a light with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn, a starved imagination keeping life in itself somehow, which brightened its expression. Not with the brightness natural to cheerful youth, but with uncertain, eager doubtful flashes, which had something painful in them, analogous to the changes of a blind face groping its way.

She was a child now, of fifteen or sixteen; but at no distant day would seem to become a woman all at once. Her father thought so as he looked at her. She was pretty. Would have been self-willed (he thought in his eminently practical way) but for her bringing-up.

"Thomas, though I have the fact before me, I find it difficult to believe that you, with your education and resources, should have brought your sister to a scene like this."

"I brought *him*, father," said Louisa, quickly. "I asked him to come."

"I am sorry to hear it. I am very sorry, indeed, to hear it. It makes Thomas no better, and it makes you worse, Louisa."

She looked at her father again, but no tear fell down her cheek.

"You! Thomas and you, to whom the circle of the sciences is open, Thomas and you who may be said to be replete with facts, Thomas and you who have been trained to mathematical exactness, Thomas and you here!" cried Mr. Gradgrind. "In this degraded position! I am amazed."

"I was tired, father. I have been tired a long time," said Louisa.

"Tired? Of what?" asked the astonished father.

"I don't know of what—of everything I think."

"Say not another word," returned Mr. Gradgrind. "You are childish. I will hear no more." He did not speak again until they had walked some half-a-mile in silence, when he gravely broke out with: "What would your best friends say, Louisa? Do you attach no value to their good opinion? What would Mr. Bounderby say?"

At the mention of this name, his daughter stole a look at him, remarkable for its intense and searching character. He saw nothing of it, for before he looked at her she had again cast down her eyes!

"What," he repeated presently, "would Mr. Bounderby say?" All the way to Stone Lodge, as with grave indignation he led the two de-

linquents home, he repeated at intervals, "What would Mr. Bounderby say?"—as if Mr. Bounderby had been Mrs. Grundy.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Not being Mrs. Grundy, who *was* Mr. Bounderby?

Why, Mr. Bounderby was as near being Mr. Gradgrind's bosom friend as a man perfectly devoid of sentiment can approach that spiritual relationship towards another man perfectly devoid of sentiment. So near was Mr. Bounderby—or, if the reader should prefer it, so far off.

He was a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare and a metallic laugh. A man made out of a coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him. A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start. A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility.

A year or two younger than his eminently practical friend, Mr. Bounderby looked older; his seven or eight and forty might have had the seven or eight added to it again, without surprising anybody. He had not much hair. One might have fancied he had talked it off; and that what was left, all standing up in disorder, was in that condition from being constantly blown about by his windy boastfulness.

In the formal drawing room of Stone Lodge, standing on the hearth-rug, warming himself before the fire, Mr. Bounderby delivered some observations to Mrs. Gradgrind on the circumstance of its being his birthday. He stood before the fire, partly because it was a cool spring afternoon, though the sun shone; partly because the shade of Stone Lodge was always haunted by the ghost of damp mortar; partly because he thus took up a commanding position, from which to subdue Mrs. Gradgrind.

"I hadn't a shoe to my foot. As to a stocking, I didn't know such a thing by name. I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty. That's the way I spent my tenth birthday. Not that a ditch was new to me, for I was born in a ditch."

Mrs. Gradgrind, a little, thin, white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, of surpassing feebleness, mental and bodily; who was always taking physic without any effect, and who, whenever she showed a symptom of coming to life, was invariably stunned by some weighty piece of fact tumbling on her; Mrs. Gradgrind hoped it was a dry ditch?

"No! As wet as a sop. A foot of water in it," said Mr. Bounderby.

"Enough to give a baby cold," Mrs. Gradgrind considered.

"Cold? I was born with inflammation of the lungs, and of everything else, I believe, that was capable of inflammation," returned Mr. Bounderby. "For years, ma'am, I was one of the most miserable little wretches ever seen. I was so sickly, that I was always moaning and groaning. I was so ragged and dirty, that you wouldn't have touched me with a pair of tongs."

Mrs. Gradgrind faintly looked at the tongs, as the most appropriate thing her imbecility could think of doing.

"How I fought through it, I don't know," said Bounderby. "I was determined, I suppose. I have been a determined character in later life, and I suppose I was then. Here I am, Mrs. Gradgrind, anyhow, and nobody to thank for my being here but myself."

Mrs. Gradgrind meekly and weakly hoped that his mother—

"My mother? Bolted, ma'am!" said Bounderby.

Mrs. Gradgrind, stunned as usual, collapsed and gave it up.

"My mother left me to my grandmother," said Bounderby; "and, according to the best of my remembrance, my grandmother was the wickedest and the worst old woman that ever lived. If I got a little pair of shoes by any chance, she would take 'em off and sell 'em for drink. Why, I have known that grandmother of mine lie in her bed and drink her fourteen glasses of liquor before breakfast!"

Mrs. Gradgrind, weakly smiling, and giving no other sign of vitality, looked (as she always did) like an indifferently executed transparency of a small female figure, without enough light behind it.

"She kept a chandler's shop," pursued Bounderby, "and kept me in an egg-box. That was the cot of my infancy; an old egg-box. As soon as I was big enough to run away, of course I ran away. Then I became a young vagabond; and instead of one old woman knocking me about and starving me, everybody of all ages knocked me about and starved me. They were right; they had no business to do anything else. I was a nuisance, an incumbrance, and a pest. I know that, very well."

His pride in having at any time of his life achieved such a great social distinction as to be a nuisance, an incumbrance and a pest, was only to be satisfied by three sonorous repetitions of the boast.

"I was to pull through it, I suppose, Mrs. Gradgrind. Whether I was to do it or not, ma'am, I did it. I pulled through it, though nobody threw me out a rope. Vagabond, errand-boy, vagabond, laborer, porter, clerk, chief manager, small partner, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. Those are the antecedents,

and the culmination. Josiah Bounderby of Coketown learnt his letters from the outsides of the shops, Mrs. Gradgrind, and was first able to tell the time upon a dial-plate, from studying the steeple clock of St. Giles' Church, London, under the direction of a drunken cripple, who was a convicted thief and an incorrigible vagrant. Tell Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, of your district schools, and your model schools, and your training schools, and your whole kettle-of-fish of schools; and Josiah Bounderby of Coketown tells you plainly, all right, all correct—he hadn't such advantages—but let us have hard-headed, solid fisted people—the education that made him won't do for everybody, he knows well—such and such his education was, however, and you may force him to swallow boiling fat, but you shall never force him to suppress the facts of his life."

Being heated when he arrived at this climax, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown stopped. He stopped just as his eminently practical friend, still accompanied by the two young culprits, entered the room. His eminently practical friend, on seeing him, stopped also, and gave Louisa a reproachful look that plainly said, "Behold your Bounderby!"

"Well!" blustered Mr. Bounderby, "what's the matter? What is young Thomas in the dumps about?"

He spoke of young Thomas, but he looked at Louisa.

"We were peeping at the circus," muttered Louisa haughtily, without lifting up her eyes, "and father caught us."

"And Mrs. Gradgrind," said her husband in a lofty manner, "I should as soon have expected to find my children reading poetry."

"Dear me," whimpered Mrs. Gradgrind. "How can you, Louisa and Thomas! I wonder at you. I declare you're enough to make one regret ever having had a family at all. I have a great mind to say I wish I hadn't. Then what would you have done, I should like to know."

Mr. Gradgrind did not seem favorably impressed by these cogent remarks. He frowned impatiently.

"As if, with my head in its present throbbing state, you couldn't go and look at the shells and minerals and things provided for you, instead of circuses!" said Mrs. Gradgrind. "You know, as well as I do, no young people have circus masters, or keep circuses in cabinets, or attend lectures about circuses. What can you possibly want to know of circuses then? I am sure you have enough to do, if that's what you want. With my head in its present state, I couldn't remember the mere names of half the facts you have got to attend to."

"That's the reason!" pouted Louisa.

"Don't tell me that's the reason, because it can be nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Gradgrind. "Go and be somethingological directly." Mrs. Gradgrind was not a scientific character, and usually dismissed her children to



their studies with this general injunction to choose their pursuit.

In truth, Mrs. Gradgrind's stock of facts in general was woefully defective, but Mr. Gradgrind in raising her to her high matrimonial position had been influenced by two reasons. Firstly, she was most satisfactory as a question of figures; and, secondly, she had "no nonsense" about her. By nonsense he meant fancy; and truly it is probable she was as free from any alloy of that nature, as any human being not arrived at the perfection of an absolute idiot, ever was.

The simple circumstance of being left alone with her husband and Mr. Bounderby, was sufficient to stun this admirable lady again, without collision between herself and any other fact. So, she once more died away, and nobody minded her.

"Bounderby," said Mr. Gradgrind, drawing a chair to the fireside, "you are always so interested in my young people—particularly in Louisa—that I make no apology for saying to you, I am very much vexed by this discovery. I have systematically devoted myself (as you know) to the education of the reason of my family. The reason is (as you know) the only faculty to which education should be addressed. And yet, Bounderby, it would appear from this unexpected circumstance of to-day, though in itself a trifling one, as if something had crept into Thomas's and Louisa's minds which is—or rather, which is not—I don't know that I can express myself better than by saying—which has never been intended to be developed, and in which their reason has no part."

"There certainly is no reason in looking with interest at a parcel of vagabonds," returned Bounderby. "When I was a vagabond myself, nobody looked with any interest at me; I know that."

"Then comes the question," said the eminently practical father, with his eyes on the fire, "in what has this vulgar curiosity its rise?"

"I'll tell you in what. In idle imagination."

"I hope not," said the eminently practical; "I confess, however, that the misgiving *has* crossed me on my way home."

"In idle imagination, Gradgrind," repeated Bounderby. "A very bad thing for anybody, but a cursed bad thing for a girl like Louisa. I should ask Mrs. Gradgrind's pardon for strong expressions, but that she knows very well I am not a refined character. Whoever expects refinement in *me*, will be disappointed. I hadn't a refined bringing up."

"Whether," said Mr. Gradgrind, pondering with his hands in his pockets, and his cavernous eyes on the fire, "whether any instructor or servant can have suggested anything? Whether Louisa or Thomas can have been reading anything? Whether, in spite of all precautions, any idle story book can have got into the house? Because, in minds that have been practically formed by rule and line, from

the cradle upwards, this is so curious, so incomprehensible."

"Stop a bit!" cried Bounderby, who all this time had been standing, as before, on the hearth, bursting at the very furniture of the room with explosive humility. "You have one of those strollers' children in the school."

"Cecilia Jupe, by name," said Mr. Gradgrind, with something of a stricken look at his friend.

"Now, stop a bit!" cried Bounderby again. "How did she come there?"

"Why, the fact is, I saw the girl myself for the first time, only just now. She specially applied here at the house to be admitted, as not regularly belonging to our town, and—yes, you are right, Bounderby, you are right."

"Now stop a bit!" cried Bounderby, once more.

"Louisa saw her when she came?"

"Louisa certainly did see her, for she mentioned the application to me. But Louisa saw her, I have no doubt, in Mrs. Gradgrind's presence."

"Pray, Mrs. Gradgrind," said Bounderby, "what passed?"

"Oh, my poor health!" returned Mrs. Gradgrind. "The girl wanted to come to the school, and Mr. Gradgrind wanted girls to come to the school, and Louisa and Thomas both said that the girl wanted to come, and, that Mr. Gradgrind wanted girls to come, and how was it possible to contradict them when such was the fact!"

"Now I tell you what, Gradgrind!" said Mr. Bounderby. "Turn this girl to the right-about, and there's an end of it."

"I am much of your opinion."

"Do it at once," said Bounderby, "has always been my motto from a child. When I thought I would run away from my egg-box and my grandmother, I did it at once. Do you the same. Do this at once!"

"Are you walking?" asked his friend. "I have the father's address. Perhaps you would not mind walking to town with me?"

"Not the least in the world," said Mr. Bounderby, "as long as you do it at once!"

So, Mr. Bounderby threw on his hat—he always threw it on, as expressing a man who had been far too busily employed in making himself, to acquire any fashion of wearing his hat—and with his hands in his pockets sauntered out into the hall. "I never wear gloves," it was his custom to say. "I didn't climb up the ladder in *them*. Shouldn't be so high up, if I had."

Being left to saunter in the hall a minute or two while Mr. Gradgrind went up stairs for the address, he opened the door of the children's study and looked into that serene floor clothed apartment, which, notwithstanding its book-cases, and its cabinets, and its variety of learned and philosophical appliances, had much of the genial aspect of a room devoted to hair-cutting. Louisa languidly leaned upon the window, looking out,

without looking at any thing, while young Thomas stood sniffing revengefully at the fire. Adam Smith and Malthus, two younger Gradgrinds, were out at a lecture in custody; and little Jane, after manufacturing a good deal of moist pipe-clay on her face with slate pencil and tears, had fallen asleep over vulgar fractions.

"It's all right now, Louisa; it's all right, young Thomas," said Mr. Bounderby; "you won't do so any more. I'll answer for it's being all over with father. Well, Louisa, that's worth a kiss, isn't it?"

"You can take one, Mr. Bounderby," returned Louisa, when she had coldly paused, and slowly walked across the room, and ungraciously raised her cheek towards him, with her face turned away.

"Always my pet; ain't you, Louisa?" said Mr. Bounderby. "Good bye, Louisa!"

He went his way, but she stood on the same spot, rubbing the cheek he had kissed, with her handkerchief, until it was burning red. She was still doing this, five minutes afterwards.

"What are you about, Loo?" her brother sulkily remonstrated. "You'll rub a hole in your face."

"You may cut the piece out with your pen-knife if you like, Tom. I wouldn't cry!"

## CHAPTER V.

Coketown, to which Messrs. Bounderby and Gradgrind now walked, was a triumph of fact; it had no greater taint of fancy in it than Mrs. Gradgrind herself. Let us strike the key-note, Coketown, before pursuing our tune.

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained; against them were to be set off,

comforts of life which found their way all over the world, and elegances of life which made we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned. The rest of its features were voluntary, and they were these.

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely useful. If the members of a religious persuasion built a chapel there—as the members of eighteen religious persuasions had done—they made it a pious warehouse, of red brick, with sometimes (but this only in highly ornamented examples) a bell in a birdcage on the top of it. The solitary exception was the New Church; a stuccoed edifice with a square steeple over the door, terminating in four stunted pinnacles like florid wooden legs. All the public inscriptions in the town were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white. The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction. Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial.—The McChoakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and the relations between master and man were all fact, and everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn't state in figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, world without end, Amen.

A town so sacred to fact, and so triumphant in its assertion, of course got on well? Why no, not quite well. No? Dear me!

No. Coketown did not come out of its own furnaces, in all respects like gold that had stood the fire. First, the perplexing mystery of the place was, Who belonged to the eighteen denominations? Because, whoever did, the laboring people did not. It was very strange to walk through the streets on a Sunday morning, and note how few of *them* the barbarous jangling of bells that was driving the sick and nervous mad, called away from their own quarter, from their own close rooms, from the corners of their own streets, where they lounged listlessly, gazing at all the church and chapel going, as at a thing with which they had no manner of concern. Nor was it merely the stranger who noticed this, because there was a native organization in Coketown itself, whose members were to be heard of in the House of Commons every session indignantly petitioning for acts of parliament that should make these people religious by main force. Then, came the Teetotal Society, who complained that these same people *would* get drunk, and showed in tabular statements that they did get drunk, and proved at tea parties that no inducement, human or Divine (except a medal,) would induce them to forego

their custom of getting drunk. Then, came the chemist and druggist, with other tabular statements, showing that when they didn't get drunk, they took opium. Then, came the experienced chaplain of the jail, with more tabular statements, confirming all the previous tabular statements, and showing that the same people *would* resort to low haunts, hidden from the public eye, where they heard low singing and saw low dancing, and mayhap joined in it; and where A. B., aged twenty-four next birth-day, and committed for eighteen months' solitary, had himself said (not that he had ever shown himself particularly worthy of belief) his ruin began, as he was perfectly sure and confident that otherwise he would have been a tip-top moral specimen. Then, came Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, the two gentlemen at this present moment walking through Coketown, and both eminently practical, who could, on occasion, furnish more tabular statements derived from their own personal experience, and illustrated by cases they had known and seen, from which it clearly appeared—in short it was the only clear thing in the case—that these same people were a bad lot altogether, gentlemen; that do what you would for them they were never thankful for it, gentlemen; that they were restless, gentlemen; that they never knew what they wanted; that they lived upon the best, and bought fresh butter, and insisted on Mocha coffee, and rejected all but prime parts of meat, and yet were eternally dissatisfied and unmanageable. In short, it was the moral of the old nursery fable:

There was an old woman, and what do you think?  
She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink;  
Victuals and drink were the whole of her diet,  
And yet this old woman would NEVER be quiet.

Is it possible, I wonder, that there was any analogy between the case of the Coketown population and the case of the little Gradgrinds? Surely, none of us in our sober senses and acquainted with figures, are to be told at this time of day that one of the foremost elements in the existence of the Coketown working people had been for scores of years deliberately set at naught? That there was any Fancy in them demanding to be brought into healthy existence instead of struggling on in convulsions? That exactly in the ratio as they worked long and monotonously, the craving grew within them for some physical relief—some relaxation, encouraging good humor and good spirits, and giving them a vent—some holiday, though it were but for an honest dance to a stirring band of music—some occasional light pie in which even M'Choakumchild had no finger—which craving must and would be satisfied aright, or must and would inevitably go wrong, until the laws of the Creation were repealed?

"This man lives at Pod's End, and I don't quite know Pod's End," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Which is it, Bounderby?"

Mr. Bounderby knew it was somewhere down town, but knew no more respecting it. So they stopped for a moment, looking about.

Almost as they did so, there came running round the corner of the street, at a quick pace, and with a frightened look, a girl whom Mr. Gradgrind recognised. "Halloa!" said he. "Stop! Where are you going? Stop!" Girl number twenty stopped then, palpitating, and made him a curtsy.

"Why are you tearing about the streets?" said Mr. Gradgrind, "in this improper manner?"

"I was—I was run after, sir," the girl panted, "and I wanted to get away."

"Run after?" repeated Mr. Gradgrind.—"Who would run after you?"

The question was unexpectedly and suddenly answered for her, by the colorless boy, Bitzer, who came round the corner with such blind speed and so little anticipating a stoppage on the pavement, that he brought himself up against Mr. Gradgrind's waistcoat, and rebounded into the road.

"What do you mean, boy?" said Mr. Gradgrind. "What are you doing? How dare you dash against—everybody—in this manner?"

Bitzer picked up his cap, which the concussion had knocked off, and backing, and knocking his forehead, pleaded that it was an accident.

"Was this boy running after you, Jupe?" asked Mr. Gradgrind.

"Yes, sir," said the girl reluctantly.

"No, I wasn't, sir!" cried Bitzer. "Not till she ran away from me. But the horse-riders never mind what they say, sir; they're famous for it. You know the horse-riders are famous for never minding what they say," addressing Sissy. "It's as well known in the town as—please, sir, as the multiplication table isn't known to the horse-riders." Bitzer tried Mr. Bounderby with this.

"He frightened me so," said the girl, "with his cruel faces!"

"Oh!" cried Bitzer. "Oh! An't you one of the rest? An't you a horse-rider? I never looked at her, sir. I asked her if she would know how to define a horse to-morrow, and offered to tell her again, and she ran away, and I ran after her, sir, that she might know how to answer when she was asked. You wouldn't have thought of saying such mischief if you hadn't been a horse-rider!"

"Her calling seems to be pretty well known among 'em," observed Mr. Bounderby. "You'd have had the whole school peeping in a row, in a week."

"Truly, I think so," returned his friend. "Bitzer, turn you about and take yourself home. Jupe, stay here a moment. Let me hear of your running in this manner any more, boy, and you will hear of me through the master of the school. You understand what I mean. Go along."

The boy stopped in his rapid blinking,



knuckled his forehead again, glanced at Sissy, turned about, and retreated.

"Now, girl," said Mr. Gradgrind, "take this gentleman and me to your father's; we are going there. What have you got in that bottle you are carrying?"

"Gin?" said Mr. Bounderby.

"Dear, no sir! It's the nine oils."

"The what?" cried Mr. Bounderby.

"The nine oils, sir. To rub father with."

Then, said Mr. Bounderby, with a loud, short laugh, "what the devil do you rub your father with nine oils for?"

"It's what our people always use, sir, when they get any hurts in the ring," replied the girl, looking over her shoulder, to assure herself that her pursuer was gone. "They bruise themselves very bad sometimes."

"Serve 'em right," said Mr. Bounderby, "for being idle." She glanced up at his face with mingled astonishment and dread.

"By George!" said Mr. Bounderby, "when I was four or five years younger than you, I had worse bruises upon me than ten oils, twenty oils, forty oils, would have rubbed off. I didn't get 'em by posture making, but by being banged about. There was no rope-dancing for me; I danced on the bare ground and was larruped with the rope."

Mr. Gradgrind, though hard enough, was by no means so rough a man as Mr. Bounderby. His character was not unkind, all things considered; it might have been a positively kind one indeed if he had only made a good round mistake in the arithmetic that balanced it, years ago. He said, in what he meant for a re-assuring tone, as they turned down a narrow road, "And this is Pod's End; is it, Jupe?"

"This is it, sir, and—if you wouldn't mind, sir—this is the house."

She stopped, at twilight, at the door of a mean little public house, with dim red lights in it. As haggard and as shabby, as if, for want of custom, it had itself taken to drinking, and had gone the way all drunkards go, and was very near the end of it.

"It's only crossing the bar, sir, and up the stairs, if you wouldn't mind, and waiting there for a moment till I get a candle. If you should hear a dog, sir, it's only Merrylegs, and he only barks."

"Merrylegs and nine oils, eh!" said Mr. Bounderby, entering last with his metallic laugh. "Pretty well this, for a self-made man!"

## CHAPTER VI.

The name of the public house was the Pegasus's Arms. The Pegasus's legs might have been made to the purpose: but, underneath the winged horse upon the sign-board, the Pegasus's Arms was inscribed in Roman letters. Beneath that inscription again, in a flowing scroll, the painter had touched off the lines:

Good malt makes good beer,  
Walk in, and they'll draw it here,  
Good wine makes good brandy,  
Give us a call, and you'll find it handy.

Framed and glazed upon the wall behind the dingy little bar, was another Pegasus—a theatrical one—with real gauze let in for his wings, golden stars stuck on all over him, and his ethereal harness made of red silk.

As it had grown too dusky without, to see the sign, and as it had not grown light enough within to see the picture, Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby received no offence from these idealities. They followed the girl up some steep corner-stairs without meeting any one, and stopped in the dark while she went on for a candle. They expected every moment to hear Merrylegs give tongue, but the highly-trained performing dog had not barked when the girl and the candle appeared together.

"Father is not in our room, sir," she said, with a face of great surprise. "If you wouldn't mind walking in, I'll find him directly."

They walked in; and Sissy, having set two chairs for them, sped away with a quick light step. It was a mean, shabbily furnished room, with a bed in it. The white nightcap, embellished with two peacock's feathers and a pigtail bolt upright, in which Signor Jupe had that very afternoon enlivened the varied performances with his chaste Shaksperian quips and retorts, hung upon a nail; but no other portion of his wardrobe, or other token of himself or his pursuits, was to be seen anywhere. As to Merrylegs, that respectable ancestor of the highly-trained animal, who went aboard the ark, might have been accidentally shut out of it, for any sign of a dog that was manifest to eye or ear in the Pegasus's Arms.

They heard the doors of rooms above, opening and shutting as Sissy went from one to another in quest of her father; and presently they heard voices expressing surprise. She came bounding down again in a great hurry, opened a battered and mangy old hair-trunk, found it empty, and looked round with her hands clasped and her face full of terror.

"Father must have gone down to the Booth, sir. I don't know why he should go there, but he must be there; I'll bring him in a minute!" She was gone directly, without her bonnet; with her long, dark, childish hair streaming behind her.

"What does she mean!" said Mr. Gradgrind. "Back in a minute? It's more than a mile off."

Before Mr. Bounderby could reply, a young man appeared at the door, and introducing himself with the words, "By your leaves, gentlemen!" walked in with his hands in his pockets. His face, close-shaven, thin, and sallow, was shaded by a great quantity of dark hair brushed into a roll all round his head, and parted up the centre. His legs were very robust, but shorter than legs of good proportions should have been. His chest and back

were as much too broad, as his legs were too short. He was dressed in a Newmarket coat and tight-fitting trousers; wore a shawl round his neck; smelt of lamp-oil, straw, orange-peel, horses' provender, and sawdust; and looked a most remarkable sort of Centaur, compounded of the stable and the play-house. Where the one began, and the other ended, nobody could have told with any precision. This gentleman was mentioned in the bills of the day as Mr. E. W. B. Childers, so justly celebrated for his daring vaulting act as the Wild Huntsman of the North American Prairies; in which popular performance, a diminutive boy with an old face, who now accompanied him, assisted as his infant son: being carried upside down over his father's shoulder, by one foot, and held by the crown of his head, heels upwards, in the palm of his father's hand, according to the violent paternal manner in which wild huntsmen may be observed to fondle their offspring. Made up with curls, wreaths, wings, white bismuth, and carmine, this hopeful young person soared into so pleasing a Cupid as to constitute the chief delight of the maternal part of the spectators; but, in private, where his characteristics were a precocious cutaway coat and an extremely gruff voice, he became of the Turf, turf.

"By your leaves, gentlemen," said Mr. E. W. B. Childers, glancing round the room. "It was you, I believe, that were wishing to see Jupe?"

"It was," said Mr. Gradgrind. "His daughter has gone to fetch him, but I can't wait; therefore, if you please, I will leave a message for him with you."

"You see, my friend," Mr. Bounderby put in, "we are the kind of people who know the value of time, and you are the kind of people who don't know the value of time."

"I have not," retorted Mr. Childers, after surveying him from head to foot, "the honor of knowing *you*;—but if you mean that you can make more money of your time than I can of mine, I should judge from your appearance, that you are about right."

"And when you have made it, you can keep it too, I should think," said Cupid.

"Kidderminster, stow that!" said Mr. Childers. (Master Kidderminster was Cupid's mortal name.)

"What does he come here cheeking us for, then?" cried Master Kidderminster, showing a very irascible temperament. "If you want to cheek us, pay your ochre at the doors and take it out."

"Kidderminster," said Mr. Childers, raising his voice, "stow that!—Sir," to Mr. Gradgrind, "I was addressing myself to you. You may or you may not be aware (for perhaps you have not been much in the audience), that Jupe has missed his tip very often, lately."

"Ha!—what has he missed?" asked Mr. Gradgrind, glancing at the potent Bounderby for assistance.

"Missed his tip."

"Offered at the Garters four times last night, and never done 'em once," said Master Kidderminster. "Missed his tip at the banners, too, and was loose in his ponging."

"Didn't do what he ought to do. Was short in his leaps and bad in his tumbling," Mr. Childers interpreted.

"Oh!" said Mr. Gradgrind, "that is tip, is it?"

"In a general way that's missing his tip," Mr. E. W. B. Childers answered.

"Nine-oils, Merrylegs, missing tips, garters, banners, and Ponging, chl!" ejaculated Bounderby with his laugh of laughs. "Queer sort of company too, for a man who has raised himself."

"Lower yourself, then," retorted Cupid. "Oh Lord! If you've raised yourself so high as all that comes to, let yourself down a bit."

"That is a very obtrusive lad!" said Mr. Gradgrind, turning, and knitting his brows on him.

"We'd have had a young gentleman to meet you, if we had known you were coming," retorted Master Kidderminster, nothing abashed. "It's a pity you don't have a bespeak, being so particular. You're on the Tight-Jeff, ain't you?"

"What does this unmannerly boy mean," asked Mr. Gradgrind, eyeing him in a sort of desperation, "by 'Tight-Jeff'?"

"There! Get out, get out!" said Mr. Childers, thrusting his young friend from the room, rather in the prairie manner. "Tight-Jeff or Slack-Jeff, it don't much signify; it's only tight rope and slack-rope. You were going to give me a message for Jupe?"

"Yes, I was."

"Then," continued Mr. Childers, quickly, "my opinion is, he will never receive it. Do you know much of him?"

"I never saw the man in my life."

"I doubt if you ever *will* see him now. It's pretty plain to me, he is off."

"Do you mean that he has deserted his daughter?"

"Ay! I mean," said Mr. Childers, with a nod, "that he has cut. He was goosed last night, he was goosed the night before last, he was goosed to-day. He has lately got in the way of being always goosed, and he can't stand it."

"Why has he been—so very much—Goosed?" asked Mr. Gradgrind, forcing the word out of himself, with great solemnity and reluctance.

"His joints are turning stiff, and he is getting used up," said Childers. "That's about the size of it. He has his points as a Cackler still, but he can't get a living out of *them*."

"A Cackler?" Bounderby repeated. "Here we go again!"

"A speaker, if the gentleman likes it better," said Mr. E. W. B. Childers, superciliously throwing the interpretation over his shoulder, and accompanying it with a shake of his long hair—which all shook at once. "Now, it's a remarkable fact, sir, that it cut that man deep

er, to know that his daughter knew of his being goosed, than to go through with it."

"Good!" interrupted Mr. Bounderby. "This is good, Gradgrind! A man so fond of his daughter, that he runs away from her! This is devilish good! Ha! ha! Now, I'll tell you what, young man. I haven't always occupied my present station of life. I know what these things are. You may be astonished to hear it, but my mother ran away from me."

E. W. B. Childers replied pointedly, that he was not at all astonished to hear it.

"Very well," said Bounderby. "I was born in a ditch, and my mother ran away from me. Do I excuse her for it? No. Have I ever excused her for it? Not I. What do I call her for it? I call her probably the very worst woman that ever lived in the world, except my drunken grandmother. There's no family pride about me, there's no imaginative sentimental humbug about me. I call a spade a spade; and I call the mother of Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, without any fear or any favor, what I should call her if she had been the mother of Dick Jones of Wapping. So, with this man. He is a runaway rogue and a vagabond, that's what he is, in English."

"It's all the same to me what he is or what he is not, whether in English or whether in French," retorted Mr. E. W. B. Childers, facing about. "I am telling your friend what's the fact; if you don't like to hear it, you can avail yourself of the open air. You give it mouth enough, you do; but give it mouth in your own building at least," remonstrated E. W. B. with stern irony. "Don't give it mouth in this building, till you're called upon. You have got some building of your own, I dare say, now?"

"Perhaps so," replied Mr. Bounderby, rattling his money and laughing.

"Then give it mouth in your own building, will you; if you please?" said Childers. "Because this isn't a strong building, and too much of you might bring it down!"

Eyeing Mr. Bounderby from head to foot again, he turned from him, as from a man finally disposed of, to Mr. Gradgrind.

"Jude sent his daughter out on an errand not an hour ago, and then was seen to slip out himself, with his hat over his eyes and a bundle tied up in a handkerchief under his arm. She will never believe it of him; but he has cut away and left her."

"Pray," said Mr. Gradgrind, "why will she never believe it of him?"

"Because those two were one. Because they were never asunder. Because, up to this time, he seemed to dote upon her," said Childers, taking a step or two to look into the empty trunk. Both Mr. Childers and Master Kidderminster walked in a curious manner; with their legs wider apart than the general run of men, and with a very knowing assumption of being stiff in the knees. This walk was common to all the male members of Sleary's company, and

was understood to express, that they were always on horseback.

"Poor Sissy! He had better have apprenticed her," said Childers, giving his hair another shake, as he looked up from the empty box. "Now, he leaves her without anything to take to."

"It is creditable to you who have never been apprenticed, to express that opinion," returned Mr. Gradgrind, approvingly.

"I never apprenticed? I was apprenticed when I was seven year old. Did the canvass, more or less, every day of my life, till I was out of my time," said Childers. Seeing Mr. Gradgrind at a loss, he explained very clearly by circular motion of his hand, and by the rapid interjections, "Hi! hi! hi!" uttered as stimulants to a suppositious horse, that doing the canvass was synonymous with riding round the ring.

"Oh! You mean that?" said Mr. Gradgrind, rather resentfully, as having been defrauded of his good opinion. "I was not aware of its being the custom to apprentice young persons to —"

"Idleness," Mr. Bounderby put in with a loud laugh. "No, by the Lord Harry! Nor I!"

"Her father always had it in his head," resumed Childers, feigning unconsciousness of Mr. Bounderby's existence, "that she was to be taught the deuce-and-all of education. How it got into his head, I can't say; I can only say that it never got out. He has been picking up a bit of reading for her, here—and a bit of writing for her, there—and a bit of cyphering for her, somewhere else—these seven years. If she had been apprenticed, she would have been doing the garlands in an independent way by this time."

Mr. E. W. Childers took one of his hands out of his pockets, stroked his face and chin, and looked, with a good deal of doubt and a little hope, at Mr. Gradgrind. From the first he had sought to conciliate that gentleman, for the sake of the deserted girl.

"When Sissy got into the school here," he pursued, "her father was as pleased as Punch. I couldn't altogether make out why, myself, as we were not stationary here, being but comers and goers anywhere. I suppose, however, he had this move in his mind—he was always half cracked—and then considered her provided for. If you should happen to have looked in to-night, for the purpose of telling him that you were going to do her any little service," said Mr. Childers, stroking his face again and repeating his look, "it would be very fortunate and well timed; very fortunate and well-timed."

"On the contrary," returned Mr. Gradgrind, "I came to tell him that her connexions made her not an object for the school, and that she must not attend any more. Still, if her father really has left her, without any connivance on her part—Bounderby, let me have a word with you."

Upon this, Mr. Childers politely betook him-



self, with his equestrian walk, to the landing outside the door, and there stood stroking his face and softly whistling. While thus engaged, he overheard such phrases in Mr. Bounderby's voice, as "No. I say no. I advise you not. I say by no means." While, from Mr. Gradgrind, he heard in his much lower tone the words, "But even as an example to Louisa, of what this pursuit which has been the subject of a vulgar curiosity, leads to and ends in. Think of it, Bounderby, in that point of view."

Meanwhile, the various members of Sleary's company gradually gathered together from the upper regions, where they were quartered, and, from standing about, talking in low voices to one another and to Mr. Childers, gradually insinuated themselves and him into the room. There were two or three handsome young women among them, with their two or three husbands, and their two or three mothers, and their eight or nine little children, who did the fairy business when required. The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole; the father of a third family often made a pyramid of both those fathers, with Master Kidderminster for the apex, and himself for the base; all the fathers could dance upon rolling casks, stand upon bottles, catch knives and balls, twirl hand-basins, ride upon anything, jump over everything, and stick at nothing. All the mothers could (and did) dance, upon the slack wire and the tight rope, and perform rapid acts on bare-backed steeds; none of them were at all particular in respect of showing their legs; and one of them, alone in a Greek chariot, drove six in hand into every town they came to. They all assumed to be mighty rakish and knowing, they were not very tidy in their private dresses, they were not at all orderly in their domestic arrangements, and the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject. Yet there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another, deserving, often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world.

Last of all appeared Mr. Sleary; a stout man as already mentioned, with one fixed eye and one loose eye, a voice (if it can be called so) like the efforts of a broken old pair of bellows, a flabby surface, and a muddled head which was never sober and never drunk.

"Thquire!" said Mr. Sleary, who was troubled with asthma, and whose breath came far too thick and heavy for the letter s, "Your thervant! Thith ith a bad piethe of biithnith, thith ith. You've heard of my Clown and hith dog being thuppothed to have morrithed?"

He addressed Mr. Gradgrind, who answered "Yes."

"Well Thquire," he returned, taking off his

hat, and rubbing the lining with his pocket-handkerchief, which he kept inside it for the purpose. "Ith it your intentionth to do anything for the poor girl, Thquire?"

"I shall have something to propose to her when she comes back," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"Glad to hear it, Thquire. Not that I want to get rid of the child, any more than I want to thtand in her way. I'm willing to take her prentith, though at her age ith late. My voithe ith a little huthky, Thquire, and not eathy heard by them ath don't know me; but if you'd been chilled and heated, heated and chilled, chilled and heated, in the ring when you wath young, ath often ath I have been, your voithe would'n't have lathted out, Thquire, no more than mine."

"I dare say not," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"What thall it be, Thquire, while you wait? Thall it be Therry? Give it a name, Thquire!" said Mr. Sleary, with hospitable ease.

"Nothing for me, I thank you," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"Don't thay nothing, Thquire. What doth your friend thay? If you haven't took your feed yet, have a glath of bitterth."

Here his daughter Josephine—a pretty fair-haired girl of eighteen, who had been tied on a horse at two years old, and had made a will at twelve, which she always carried about with her, expressive of her dying desire to be drawn to the grave by the two piebald ponies—cried "Father, hush! she has come back!" Then came Sissy Jupe, running into the room as she had run out of it. And when she saw them all assembled, and saw their looks, and saw no father there, she broke into a most deplorable cry, and took refuge on the bosom of the most accomplished tight-rope lady (herself in the family way,) who knelt down on the floor to nurse her, and to weep over her.

"Ith an infernal thame, upon my thoul it ith," said Sleary.

"O my dear father, my good kind father, where are you gone? You are gone to wry to do me some good, I know! You are gone away for my sake, I am sure. And how miserable and helpless you will be without me, poor, poor father, until you come back!" It was so pathetic to hear her saying many things of this kind, with her face turned upward, and her arms stretched out as if she were trying to stop his departing shadow and embrace it, that no one spoke a word until Mr. Bounderby (growing impatient) took the case in hand.

"Now, good people all," said he, "this is wanton waste of time. Let the girl understand the fact. Let her take it from me, if you like, who have been run away from, myself. Here, what's your name! Your father has absconded—deserted you—and you must n't expect to see him again as long as you live."

They cared so little for plain Fact, these people, and were in that advanced state of degeneracy on the subject, that instead of be

ing impressed by the speaker's strong common sense, they took it in extraordinary dudgeon. The men muttered "Shame!" and the women "Brute!" and Sleary, in some haste, communicated the following hint, apart to Mr. Bounderby.

"I tell you what, Thquire. To thepeak plain to you, my opinion ith that you had better cut it thort, and drop it. They're a very good natur'd people, my people, but they're accuthomed to be quick in their movement; and if you don't act upon my advithe, I'm damned if I don't believe they'll pith you out o' the winder."

Mr. Bounderby being restrained by this mild suggestion, Mr. Gradgrind found an opening for his eminently practical exposition of the subject.

"It is of no moment," said he, "whether this person is to be expected back at any time, or the contrary. He is gone away, and there is no present expectation of his return. That, I believe, is agreed on all hands."

"Thath agreed, Thquire. Ththick to that!" From Sleary.

"Well then. I, who came here to inform the father of the poor girl, Jupe, that she could not be received at the school any more, in consequence of there being practical objections, into which I need not enter, to the reception there of the children of persons so employed, am prepared in these altered circumstances to make a proposal. I am willing to take charge of you, Jupe, and to educate you, and provide for you. The only condition (over and above your good behavior) I make is, that you decide now, at once, whether to accompany me or remain here. Also, that if you accompany me now, it is understood that you communicate no more with any of your friends, who are here present. These observations comprise the whole of the case."

"At the thame time," said Sleary, "I mutht put in my word, Thquire, tho that both thides of the banner may be equally theen. If you like, Thethilia, to be prentitht, you know the natur of the work, and you know your companionth. Emma Gordon, in whothe lap you're a lyin' at prethent, would be a mother to you, and Joth'phine would be a thithter to you. I don't pretend to be of the angel breed mythelf, and I don't thay but what, when you mith'd your tip, you'd find me cut up rough, and thwear an oath or two at you. But what I thay, Thquire, ith, that good tempered or bad tempered, I never did a horth a injury yet, no more than thwearing at him went, and that I don't expect I thall begin otherwithe at my time of life, with a rider. I never wath muth of a Cackler, Thquire, and I have thed my thay."

The latter part of this speech was addressed to Mr. Gradgrind, who received it with a grave inclination of his head, and then remarked:

"The only observation I will make to you, Jupe, in the way of influencing your decision, is, that it is highly desirable to have a sound,

practical education, and that even your father himself (from what I understand) appears, on your behalf, to have known and felt that much."

The last words had a visible effect upon her. She stopped in her wild crying, a little detached herself from Emma Gordon, and turned her face full upon her patron. The whole company perceived the force of the change, and drew a long breath together, that plainly said, "she will go!"

"Be sure you know your own mind, Jupe," Mr. Gradgrind cautioned her; "I say no more. Be sure you know your own mind!"

"When father comes back," cried the girl, bursting into tears again after a minute's silence, "how will he ever find me if I go away!"

"You may be quite at ease," said Mr. Gradgrind, calmly; he worked out the whole matter like a sum; "you may be quite at ease, Jupe, on that score. In such a case, your father, I apprehend, must find out Mr. —"

"Thleary. Thath my name, Thquire. Not athamed of it. Known all over England, and alwayth paythe ith way."

"Must find out Mr. Sleary, who would then let him know where you went. I should have no power of keeping you against his wish, and he would have no difficulty, at any time, in finding Mr. Thomas Gradgrind of Coketown. I am well known."

"Well known," assented Mr. Sleary, rolling his loose eye. "You're one of the thort, Thquire, that keepth a prethious thight of money out of the houth. But never mind that at prethent."

There was another silence; and then she exclaimed, sobbing with her hands before her face, "Oh give me my clothes, give me my clothes, and let me go away before I break my heart!"

The women sadly bestirred themselves to get the clothes together—it was soon done, for they were not many—and to pack them in a basket which had often travelled with them. Sissy sat all the time, upon the ground, still sobbing and covering her eyes. Mr. Gradgrind and his friend Bounderby stood near the door, ready to take her away. Mr. Sleary stood in the middle of the room, with the male members of the company about him, exactly as he would have stood in the centre of the ring during his daughter Josephine's performance. He wanted nothing but his whip.

The basket packed in silence, they brought her bonnet to her, and smoothed her disordered hair, and put it on. Then they pressed about her, and bent over her in very natural attitudes, kissing and embracing her; and brought the children to take leave of her; and were a tender-hearted, simple, foolish set of women altogether.

"Now, Jupe," said Mrs. Gradgrind, "if you are quite determined, come!"

But she had to take her farewell of the male part of the company yet, and every one of them



had to unfold his arms (for they all assumed the professional attitude when they found themselves near Sleary), and give her a parting kiss—Master Kidderminster excepted, in whose young nature there was an original flavor of the misanthrope, who was also known to have harbored matrimonial views, and who moodily withdrew. Mr. Sleary was reserved until the last. Opening his arms wide, he took her by both hands, and would have sprung her up and down, after the riding-master manner of congratulating young ladies on their dismounting from a rapid act; but there was no rebound in Sissy, and she only stood before him crying.

"Good bye, my dear!" said Sleary. "You'll make your fortune, I hope, and none of our poor folkth will ever trouble you, I'll pound it. I with your fater hadn't taken hith dog with him; ith a ill-conwenient to have the dog out of the bilth. But on thecond thought, he wouldn't have performed without hith mathter, tho ith ath broad ath ith long!"

With that, he regarded her attentively with his fixed eye, surveyed the company with the loose one, kissed her, shook his head, and handed her to Mr. Gradgrind as to a horse.

"There the ith, Thquire," he said, sweeping her with a professional glance as if she were being adjusted in her seat, "and the'll do you juthithe. Good bye, Thethilial!"

"Good bye Cecilial!" "Good bye Sissy!" "God bless you, dear!" In a variety of voices from all the room.

But the riding-master's eye had observed the bottle of the nine oils in her bosom, and he now interposed with "Leave the bottle, my dear; ith large to carry; it will be of no uth to you now. Give it to me!"

"No, no!" she said, in another burst of tears. "Oh no! Pray let me keep it for fater till he comes back! He will want it, when he comes back. He had never thought of going away, when he sent me for it. I must keep it for him, if you please!"

"Tho be it, my dear. (You thee how it ith, Thquire!) Farewell, Thethilial! My latht worth to you ith thith, Ththick to the termth of your engagement, be obedient to the Thquire, and forget uth. But if, when you're grown up and married and well off, you come upon any horth-riding ever, don't be hard upon it, don't be croth with it, give it a Bethpeak if you can, and think you might do wurth. People mutht be amused, Thquire, thomehow, continued Sleary, rendered more pursy than ever, by so much talking; "they can't be alwayth a working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a learning. Make the beth of uth: not the wurtht. I've got my living out of the horth-riding all my life, I know; but I conthider that I lay down the philothophy of the thubject when I thay to you, Thquire, make the beth of uth: not the wurtht!"

The Sleary philosophy was propounded as they went down stairs; and the fixed eye of Philosophy—and its rolling eye, too—soon

lost the three figures and the basket in the darkness of the street.

## CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Bounderby being a bachelor, an elderly lady presided over his establishment, in consideration of a certain annual stipend. Mrs. Sparsit was this lady's name; and she was a prominent figure in attendance on Mr. Bounderby's car, as it rolled along in triumph with the Bully of humility inside.

For, Mrs. Sparsit had not only seen different days, but was highly connected. She had a great aunt living in these very times called Lady Scadgers. Mr. Sparsit, deceased, of whom she was the relict, had been by the mother's side what Mrs. Sparsit still called "a Powler." Strangers of limited information and dull apprehension were sometimes observed not to know what a Powler was, and even to appear uncertain whether it might be a business, or a political party, or a profession of faith. The better class of minds, however, did not need to be informed that the Powlers were an ancient stock, who could trace themselves so exceedingly far back that it was not surprising if they sometimes lost themselves—which they had rather frequently done, as respected horse-flesh, blind-hokey, Hebrew monetary transactions, and the Insolvent Debtors Court.

The late Mr. Sparsit, being by the mother's side a Powler, married this lady, being by the father's side a Scadgers. Lady Scadgers (an immensely fat old woman, with an inordinate appetite for butcher's meat, and a mysterious leg, which had now refused to get out of bed for fourteen years) contrived the marriage, at a period when Sparsit was just of age, and chiefly noticeable for a slender body, weakly supported on two long slim props, and surmounted by no head worth mentioning. He inherited a fair fortune from his uncle, but owed it all before he came into it, and spent it twice over immediately afterwards. Thus, when he died, at twenty-four (the scene of his decease Calais, and the cause brandy), he did not leave his widow, from whom he had been separated soon after the honeymoon, in affluent circumstances. That bereaved lady, fifteen years older than he, fell presently at deadly feud with her only relative, Lady Scadgers; and, partly to spite her ladyship, and, partly to maintain herself, went out at a salary. And here she was now in her elderly days, with the Coriolanian style of nose and the dense black eyebrows which had captivated Sparsit, making Mr. Bounderby's tea as he took his breakfast.

If Bounderby had been a Conqueror, and Mrs. Sparsit a captive Princess whom he took about as a feature in his state-procussions, he could not have made a greater flourish with her than he habitually did. Just as it belonged to his boastfulness to depreciate his own extraction, so it belonged to it to exalt Mrs. Sparsit's. In the measure that he would



not allow his own youth to have been attended by a single favorable circumstance, he brightened Mrs. Sparsit's juvenile career with every possible advantage, and showered wagon loads of early roses all over that lady's path. "And yet, sir," he would say, "how does it turn out after all? Why here she is at a hundred a year (I give her a hundred, which she is pleased to term handsome), keeping the house of Josiah Bounderby of Coketown!"

Nay, he made this foil of his so very widely known, that third parties took it up, and handled it on some occasions with considerable briskness. It was one of the most exasperating attributes of Bounderby, that he not only sang his own praises, but stimulated other men to sing them. There was a moral infection of claptrap in him. Strangers, modest enough elsewhere, started up at dinners in Coketown, and boasted, in quite a rampant way, of Bounderby. They made him out to be the Royal arms, the Union Jack, Magna Charta, John Bull, Habeas Corpus, the Bill of Rights, An Englishman's house is his castle, Church and State, and God save the Queen, all put together. And as often (and it was very often) as an orator of this kind brought into his peroration,

"Princes and Lords may flourish or may fade,  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:"

—it was, for certain, more or less understood among the company that he had heard of Mrs. Sparsit.

"Mr. Bounderby," said Mrs. Sparsit, "you are unusually slow, sir, with your breakfast this morning."

"Why, ma'am," he returned, "I am thinking about Tom Gradgrind's whim;" Tom Gradgrind, for a bluff independent manner of speaking—as if somebody were always endeavoring to bribe him with immense sums to say Thomas, and he wouldn't; "Tom Gradgrind's whim, ma'am, of bringing up the tumbling-girl."

"The girl is now waiting to know," said Mrs. Sparsit, "whether she is to go straight to the school, or up to the Lodge."

"She must wait, ma'am," answered Bounderby, "till I know myself. We shall have Tom Gradgrind down here presently, I suppose. If he should wish her to remain here a day or two longer, of course she can, ma'am."

"Of course she can if you wish it, Mr. Bounderby."

"I told him I would give her a shake-down here, last night, in order that he might sleep on it before he decided to let her have any association with Louisa."

"Indeed, Mr. Bounderby? Very thoughtful of you!"

Mrs. Sparsit's Coriolanian nose underwent a slight expansion of the nostrils, and her black eyebrows contracted as she took a sip of tea.

"It's tolerably clear to me," said Bounderby, "that the little puss can get small good out of such companionship."

"Are you speaking of young Miss Gradgrind, Mr. Bounderby?"

"Yes, ma'am, I am speaking of Louisa."

"Your observation being limited to 'little puss,'" said Mrs. Sparsit, "and there being two little girls in question, I did not know which might be indicated by that expression."

"Louisa," repeated Mr. Bounderby. "Louisa, Louisa."

"You are quite another father to Louisa, sir." Mrs. Sparsit took a little more tea; and, as she bent her again contracted eyebrows over her steaming cup, rather looked as if her classical countenance were invoking the infernal gods.

"If you had said I was another father to Tom—young Tom, I mean, not my friend, Tom Gradgrind—you might have been nearer the mark. I am going to take young Tom into my office. Going to have him under my wing, ma'am."

"Indeed? Rather young for that, is he not, sir?" Mrs. Sparsit's "sir," in addressing Mr. Bounderby, was a word of ceremony, rather exacting consideration for herself in the use, than honoring him.

"I'm not going to take him at once; he is to finish his educational cramming before then," said Bounderby. "By the Lord Harry, he'll have enough of it, first and last! He'd open his eyes, that boy would, if he knew how empty of learning *my* young man was, at his time of life." Which, by the by, he probably did know, for he had heard of it often enough. "But it's extraordinary the difficulty I have on scores of such subjects, in speaking to any one on equal terms. Here, for example, I have been speaking to you this morning about Tumblers. Why, what do *you* know about tumblers? At the time when, to have been a tumbler in the mud of the streets, would have been a godsend to me, a prize in the lottery to me, you were at the Italian Opera. You were coming out of the Italian Opera, ma'am, in white satin and jewels, a blaze of splendor, when I hadn't a penny to buy a link to light you."

"I certainly, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, with a dignity serenely mournful, "was familiar with the Italian Opera at a very early age."

"Egad, ma'am, so was I," said Bounderby, "—with the wrong side of it. A hard bed the pavement of its Arcade used to make, I assure you. People like you, ma'am, accustomed from infancy to lie on Down feathers, have no idea *how* hard a paving-stone is, without trying it. No, no, it's of no use my talking to *you* about tumblers. I should speak of foreign dancers, and the West End of London, and May Fair, and lords and ladies and honorables."

"I trust, sir," rejoined Mrs. Sparsit, with decent resignation, "it is not necessary that you should do anything of that kind. I hope I have learnt how to accommodate myself to the changes of life. If I have acquired an interest in hearing of your instructive experi-

ences, and can scarcely hear enough of them, I claim no merit for that, since I believe it is a general sentiment."

"Well, ma'am," said her patron, perhaps some people may be pleased to say that they do like to hear, in his own unpolished way, what Josiah Bounderby of Coketown has gone through. But you must confess that you were born in the lap of luxury, yourself. Come, ma'am, you know you were born in the lap of luxury."

"I do not, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit with a shake of her head, "deny it."

Mr. Bounderby was obliged to get up from table, and stand with his back to the fire, looking at her; she was such an enhancement of his merits.

"And you were in crack society. Devilish high society," he said, warming his legs.

"It is true, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, with an affectation of humility the very opposite of his, and therefore in no danger of jostling it.

"You were in the tiptop fashion, and all the rest of it," said Mr. Bounderby.

"Yes, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, with a kind of social widowhood upon her. "It is unquestionably true."

Mr. Bounderby, bending himself at the knees, literally embraced his legs in his great satisfaction, and laughed aloud. Mr. and Miss Gradgrind being then announced, he received the former with a shake of the hand, and the latter with a kiss.

"Can Jupe be sent here, Bounderby?" asked Mr. Gradgrind.

Certainly. So Jupe was sent there. On coming in, she curtseyed to Mr. Bounderby, and to his friend Tom Gradgrind, and also to Louisa; but in her confusion unluckily omitted Mrs. Sparsit. Observing this, the blustrous Bounderby had the following remarks to make:

"Now, I tell you what, my girl. The name of that lady by the teapot, is Mrs. Sparsit. That lady acts as mistress of this house, and she is a highly connected lady. Consequently, if ever you come again into any room in this house, you will make a short stay in it if you don't behave towards that lady in your most respectful manner. Now, I don't care a button what you do to me, because I don't affect to be anybody. So far from having high connexions, I have no connexions at all, and I come of the scum of the earth. But towards that lady, I do care what you do; and you shall do what is deferential and respectful, or you shall not come here."

"I hope, Bounderby," said Mr. Gradgrind, in a conciliatory voice, "that this was merely an oversight."

"My friend Tom Gradgrind suggests, Mrs. Sparsit," said Bounderby, "that this was merely an oversight. Very likely. However, as you are aware, ma'am, I don't allow of even oversights towards you."

"You are very good indeed, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, shaking her head with her state humility. "It is not worth speaking of."

Sissy, who all this time had been faintly excusing herself with tears in her eyes, was now waved over by the master of the house to Mr. Gradgrind. She stood, looking intently at him, and Louisa stood coldly by, with her eyes upon the ground, while he proceeded thus:

"Jupe, I have made up my mind to take you into my house; and when you are not in attendance at the school, to employ you about Mrs. Gradgrind, who is rather an invalid. I have explained to Miss Louisa—this is Miss Louisa—the miserable but natural end of your late career; and you are to expressly understand that the whole of that subject is past, and is not to be referred to any more. From this time you begin your history. You are, at present, ignorant, I know."

"Yes, sir, very," she answered, curtseying.

"I shall have the satisfaction of causing you to be strictly educated; and you will be a living proof to all who come into communication with you, of the advantages of the training you will receive. You will be reclaimed and formed. You have been in the habit, now, of reading to your father, and those people I found you among, I dare say?" said Mr. Gradgrind, beckoning her nearer to him before he said so, and dropping his voice.

"Only to father and Merrylegs, sir. At least I mean to father, when Merrylegs was always there."

"Never mind Merrylegs, Jupe," said Mr. Gradgrind, with a passing frown. "I don't ask about him. I understand you to have been in the habit of reading to your father?"

"O yes, sir, thousands of times. They were the happiest—O, of all the happy times we had together, sir!"

It was only now, when her grief broke out, that Louisa looked at her.

"And what," asked Mr. Gradgrind, in a still lower voice, "did you read to your father, Jupe?"

"About the Fairies, sir, and the Dwarf, and the Hunchback, and the Genies," she sobbed out.

"There!" said Mr. Gradgrind, "that is enough. Never breathe a word of such destructive nonsense any more. Bounderby, this is a case for rigid training, and I shall observe it with interest."

"Well," returned Mr. Bounderby, "I have given you my opinion already, and I shouldn't do as you do. But, very well, very well. Since you are bent upon it, *very well*!"

So, Mr. Gradgrind and his daughter took Cecilia Jupe off with them to Stone Lodge, and on the way Louisa never spoke one word, good or bad. And Mr. Bounderby went about his daily pursuits. And Mrs. Sparsit got behind her eyebrows and meditated in the gloom of that retreat, all the morning.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Let us strike the key note again, before pursuing the tune.

When she was half a dozen years younger, Louisa had been overheard to begin a conversation with her brother one day, by saying, "Tom, I wonder"—upon which Mr. Gradgrind, who was the person overhearing, stepped forth into the light, and said, "Louisa, never wonder!"

Herein lay the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections. Never wonder. By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, settle everything somehow, and never wonder. Bring to me, says M'Choakumchild, yonder baby just able to walk, and I will engage that it shall never wonder.

Now, besides very many babies just able to walk, there happened to be in Coketown a considerable population of babies who had been walking against time towards the infinite world, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years and more. These portentous infants being alarming creatures to stalk about in any human society, the eighteen denominations incessantly scratched one another's faces and pulled one another's hair, by way of agreeing on the steps to be taken for their improvement—which they never did; a surprising circumstance, when the happy adaptation of the means to the end is considered. Still, although they differed in every other particular, conceivable and inconceivable (especially inconceivable), they were pretty well united on the point that these unlucky infants were never to wonder. Body number one, said they must take everything on trust. Body number two, said they must take everything on political economy. Body number three, wrote leaden little books for them, showing how the good grown-up baby invariably got to the Savings Bank, and the bad grown-up baby invariably got transported.—Body number four, under dreary pretences of being droll (when it was very melancholy indeed), made the shallowest pretences of concealing pitfalls of knowledge, into which it was the duty of these babies to be smuggled and inveigled. But, all the bodies agreed that they were never to wonder.

There was a library in Coketown, to which general access was easy. Mr. Gradgrind greatly tormented his mind about what the people read in this library: a point, whereon little rivers of tabular statements periodically flowed into the howling ocean of tabular statements, which no diver ever got to any depth in and came up sane. It was a disheartening circumstance, but a melancholy fact, that even these readers persisted in wondering. They wondered about human nature, human passions, human hopes and fears, the struggles, triumphs and defeats, the cares and joys and sorrows, the lives and deaths, of common men and women. They sometimes, after fifteen hours' work, sat down to

read mere fables about men and women, more or less like themselves, and children, more or less like their own. They took De Foe to their bosoms, instead of Euclid, and seemed to be on the whole more comforted by Goldsmith than by Cocker. Mr. Gradgrind was for ever working, in print and out of print, at this eccentric sum, and he never could make out how it yielded this unaccountable product.

"I am sick of my life, Loo. I hate it altogether, and I hate everybody except you," said the unnatural young Thomas Gradgrind in the hair-cutting chamber at twilight.

"You don't hate Sissy, Tom."

"I hate to be obliged to call her Jupe. And she hates me," said Tom moodily.

"No she does not, Tom, I am sure."

"She must," said Tom. "She must just hate and detest the whole set-out of us. They'll bother her head off, I think, before they have done with her. Already she's getting as pale as wax, and as heavy as—I am."

Young Thomas expressed these sentiments, sitting astride of a chair before the fire, with his arms on the back, and his sulky face on his arms. His sister sat in the darker corner by the fireside, now looking at him, now looking at the bright sparks as they dropped upon the hearth.

"As to me," said Tom, tumbling his hair all manner of ways with his sulky hands, "I am a Donkey, that's what I am. I am as obstinate as one, I am more stupid than one—I get as much pleasure as one, and I should like to kick like one."

"Not me, I hope, Tom?"

"No, Loo; I wouldn't hurt *you*. I made an exception of you at first. I don't know what this—jolly old—Jaundiced Jail—"Tom had paused to find a sufficiently complimentary and expressive name for the parental roof, and seemed to relieve his mind for a moment by the strong alliteration of this one, "would be without you."

"Indeed, Tom? Do you really and truly say so?"

"Why, of course I do. What's the use of talking about it!" returned Tom, chafing his face on his coat sleeve as if to mortify his flesh, and have it in unison with his spirit.

"Because, Tom," said his sister, after silently watching the sparks awhile, "as I get older, and nearer growing up, I often sit wondering here, and think how unfortunate it is for me that I can't reconcile you to home better than I am able to do. I don't know what other girls know. I can't play to you, or sing to you. I can't talk to you so as to lighten your mind, for I never see any amusing sights or read any amusing books that it would be a pleasure or a relief to you to talk about, when you are tired."

"Well, no more do I. I am as bad as you in that respect; and I am a Mule too, which you're not. If father was determined to make me either a Prig or a Mule, and I am not a



Prig, why, it stands to reason, I must be a Mule. And so I am," said Tom, desperately.

"It's a great pity," said Louisa, after another pause, and speaking thoughtfully out of her dark corner; "it's a great pity, Tom. It's very unfortunate for both of us."

"Oh! You," said Tom; "you are a girl, Loo, and a girl comes out of it better than a boy does. I don't miss anything in you. You are the only pleasure I have—you can brighten even this place—and you can always lead me as you like."

"You are a dear brother, Tom; and while you think I can do such things, I don't so much mind knowing better. Though I do know better, Tom, and am very sorry for it." She came and kissed him, and went back into her corner again.

"I wish I could collect all the Facts we hear so much about," said Tom, spitefully setting his teeth, "and all the Figures, and all the people who found them out; and I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them, and blow them all up together! However, when I go to live with old Bounderby, I'll have my revenge."

"Your revenge, Tom?"

"I mean, I'll enjoy myself a little, and go about and see something, and hear something. I'll recompense myself for the way in which I have been brought up."

"But don't disappoint yourself beforehand, Tom. Mr. Bounderby thinks as father thinks, and is a great deal rougher, and not half so kind."

"Oh!" said Tom, laughing; "I don't mind that. I shall very well know how to manage and smooth old Bounderby!"

Their shadows were defined upon the wall, but those of the high presses in the room were all blended together on the wall and on the ceiling, as if the brother and sister were overhung by a dark cavern. Or, a fanciful imagination—if such treason could have been there—might have made it out to be the shadow of their subject, and of its lowering association with their future.

"What is your great mode of smoothing and managing, Tom? Is it a secret?"

"Oh!" said Tom, "if it is a secret, it's not far off. It's you. You are his little pet, you are his favorite; he'll do anything for you. When he says to me what I don't like, I shall say to him, 'My sister Loo will be hurt and disappointed, Mr. Bounderby. She always used to tell me she was sure you would be easier with me than this.' That'll bring him about, or nothing will."

After waiting for some answering remark and getting none, Tom wearily relapsed into the present time, and twined himself yawning round and about the rails of his chair, and rumped his head more and more, until he suddenly looked up, and asked:

"Have you gone to sleep, Loo?"

"No, Tom. I am looking at the fire."

"You seem to find more to look at in it

than ever I could find," said Tom. "Another of the advantages, I suppose, of being a girl."

"Tom," inquired his sister, slowly, and in a curious tone, as if she were reading what she asked, in the fire, and it were not quite plainly written there, "do you look forward with any satisfaction to this change to Mr. Bounderby's?"

"Why, there's one thing to be said of it," returned Tom, pushing his chair from him, and standing up; "it will be getting away from home."

"There is one thing to be said of it," Louisa repeated in her former curious tone; "it will be getting away from home. Yes."

"Not but what I shall be very unwilling, both to leave you, Loo, and to leave you here. But I must go, you know, whether I like it or not; and I had better go where I can take with me some advantage of your influence, than where I should lose it altogether. Don't you see?"

"Yes, Tom."

The answer was so long in coming, though there was no indecision in it that Tom went and leaned on the back of her chair, to contemplate the fire which so engrossed her, from her point of view, and see what he could make of it.

"Except that it is a fire," said Tom, "it looks to me as stupid and blank as everything else looks. What do you see in it? Not a circus?"

"I don't see anything in it, Tom, particularly. But since I have been looking at it, I have been wondering about you and me, grown up."

"Wondering again!" said Tom.

"I have such unmanageable thoughts," returned his sister, "that they *will* wonder."

"Then I beg of you, Louisa," said Mrs. Gradgrind, who had opened the door without being heard, "to do nothing of that description, for goodness sake, you inconsiderate girl, or I shall never hear the last of it from your father. And Thomas, it is really shameful, with my poor head continually wearing me out, that a boy brought up as you have been, and whose education has cost what yours has, should be found encouraging his sister to wonder, when he knows his father has expressly said that she is not to do it."

Louisa denied Tom's participation in the offence; but her mother stopped her with the conclusive answer, "Louisa, don't tell me, in my state of health; for unless you had been encouraged, it is morally and physically impossible that you could have done it."

"I was encouraged by nothing, mother, but by looking at the red sparks dropping out of the fire, and whitening and dying. It made me think, after all, how short my life would be, and how little I could hope to do in it."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Gradgrind, rendered almost energetic. "Nonsense! Don't stand there and tell me such stuff, Louisa, to my face, when you know very well that if it was ever to reach your father's ears I should never

hear the last of it. After all the trouble that has been taken with you! After the lectures you have seen! After I have heard you myself, when the whole of my right side has been benumbed, going on with your master about combustion, and calcination, and calorification, and I may say every kind of action that could drive a poor invalid distracted, to hear you talking in this absurd way about sparks and ashes! I wish," whimpered Mrs. Gradgrind, taking a chair, and discharging her strongest point before succumbing under these mere shadows of facts, "yes, I really do wish that I had never had a family, and then you would have known what it was to do without me!"

## CHAPTER IX.

Sissy Jupe had not an easy time of it, between Mr. McChoakumchild and Mrs. Gradgrind, and was not without strong impulses in the first months of her probation, to run away. It hailed facts all day long so very hard, and life in general was opened to her as such a closely-ruled cyphering-book, that assuredly she would have run away, but for only one restraint.

It is lamentable to think of; but this restraint was the result of no arithmetical process, was self-imposed in defiance of all calculation, and went dead against any table of probabilities that any Actuary would have drawn up from the premises. The girl believed that her father had not deserted her; she lived in the hope that he would come back, and in the faith that he would be made the happier by her remaining where she was.

The wretched ignorance with which Jupe clung to this consolation, rejecting the superior comfort of knowing, on a sound arithmetical basis, that her father was an unnatural vagabond, filled Mr. Gradgrind with pity. Yet, what was to be done? McChoakumchild reported that she had a very dense head for figures; that, once possessed with a general idea of the globe, she took the smallest conceivable interest in its exact measurements; that she was extremely slow in the acquisition of dates, unless some pitiful incident happened to be connected therewith; that she would burst into tears on being required (by the mental process) immediately to name the cost of two hundred and forty-seven muslin caps at fourteenpence halfpenny; that she was as low down, in the school, as low could be; that after eight weeks of induction into the elements of Political Economy, she had only yesterday been set right by a prattler three feet high, for returning to the question, "What is the first principle of this science?" the absurd answer, "To do unto others as I would that they should do unto me."

Mr. Gradgrind observed, shaking his head, that all this was very bad; that it showed the necessity of infinite grinding at the mill

of knowledge, as per system, schedule, blue book report, and tabular statements A to Z; and that Jupe "must be kept to it." So Jupe was kept to it, and became very low spirited, but no wiser.

"It would be a fine thing to be you, Miss Louisa!" she said one night, when Louisa had endeavored to make her perplexities for next day something clearer to her.

"Do you think so?"

"I should know so much, Miss Louisa. All that is difficult to me now, would be so easy then."

"You might not be the better for it, Sissy."

Sissy submitted, after a little hesitation, "I should not be the worse, Miss Louisa." To which Miss Louisa answered, "I don't know that."

There had been so little communication between these two—both because life at Stone Lodge went monotonously round like a piece of machinery which discouraged human interference, and because of the prohibition relative to Sissy's past career—that they were still almost strangers. Sissy, with her dark eyes wonderingly directed to Louisa's face, was uncertain whether to say more or to remain silent.

"You are more useful to my mother, and more pleasant with her than I can ever be." Louisa resumed. "You are pleasanter to yourself, than I am to myself."

"But, if you please, Miss Louisa," Sissy pleaded, "I am—O so stupid!"

Louisa, with a brighter laugh than usual, told her she would be wiser by and by.

"You don't know," said Sissy, half crying, "what a stupid girl I am. All through school hours I make mistakes. Mr. and Mrs. McChoakumchild call me up, over and over again, regularly to make mistakes. I can't help them. They seem to come natural to me."

"Mr. and Mrs. McChoakumchild never make any mistakes themselves, I suppose, Sissy?"

"O no!" she eagerly returned. "They know everything."

"Tell me some of your mistakes."

"I am almost ashamed," said Sissy, with reluctance. "But to-day, for instance, Mr. McChoakumchild was explaining to us about Natural Prosperity."

"National, I think it must have been," observed Louisa.

"Yes, it was—But isn't it the same?" she timidly asked.

"You had better say, National, as he said so," returned Louisa, with her dry reserve.

"National Prosperity. And he said, Now, this schoolroom is a Nation. And in this nation, there are fifty millions of money. Isn't this a prosperous nation? Girl number twenty, isn't this a prosperous nation, and a'n't you in a thriving state?"

"What did you say?" asked Louisa.

"Miss Louisa, I said I didn't know. I thought I couldn't know whether it was a

prosperous nation or not, and whether I was in a thriving state or not, unless I knew who had got the money, and whether any of it was mine. But that had nothing to do with it. It was not in the figures at all," said Sissy, wiping her eyes.

"That was a great mistake of yours," observed Louisa.

"Yes, Miss Louisa, I know it was now. Then Mr. M'Choakumchild said he would try me again. And he said, this schoolroom is an immense town, and in it there are a million of inhabitants, and only five-and-twenty are starved to death in the streets, in the course of a year. What is your remark on that proportion? And my remark was—for I couldn't think of a better one—that I thought it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million. And that was wrong, too."

"Of course it was."

"Then Mr. M'Choakumchild said he would try me once more. And he said, Here are the stutterings——"

"Statistics," said Louisa.

"Yes, Miss Louisa—they always remind me of stutterings, and that's another of my mistakes—of accidents upon the sea. And I find (Mr. M'Choakumchild said) that in a given time a hundred thousand persons went to sea on long voyages, and only five hundred of them were drowned or burned to death. What is the percentage? And I said, Miss;" here Sissy fairly sobbed as confessing with extreme contrition to her greatest error; "I said it was nothing."

"Nothing, Sissy?"

"Nothing, Miss—to the relations and friends of the people who were killed. I shall never learn," said Sissy. "And the worst of all is, that although my poor father wished me so much to learn, and although I am so anxious to learn because he wished me to, I am afraid I don't like it."

Louisa stood looking at the pretty modest head, as it drooped abashed before her, until it was raised again to glance at her face. Then she asked:

"Did your father know so much himself, that he wished you to be well taught too, Sissy?"

Sissy hesitated before replying, and so plainly showed her sense that they were entering on forbidden ground, that Louisa added, "No one hears us; and if any one did, I am sure no harm could be found in such an innocent question."

"No, Miss Louisa," answered Sissy, upon this encouragement, shaking her head; "father knows very little indeed. It's as much as he can do to write; and it's more than people in general can do to read his writing. Though it's plain to me."

"Your mother?"

"Father says she was quite a scholar. She died when I was born. She was," Sissy made

the terrible communication nervously; "she was a dancer."

"Did your father love her?" Louisa asked these questions with a strong, wild, wandering interest peculiar to her; an interest gone astray like a banished creature, and hiding in solitary places.

"O yes! As dearly as he loves me. Father loved me, first, for her sake. He carried me about with him when I was quite a baby. We have never been asunder from that time."

"Yet he leaves you now, Sissy?"

"Only for my good. Nobody understands him as I do; nobody knows him as I do. When he left me for my good—he never would have left me for his own—I know he was almost broken-hearted with the trial. He will not be happy for a single minute, till he comes back."

"Tell me more about him," said Louisa, "I will never ask you again. Where did you live?"

"We travelled about the country, and had no fixed place to live in. Father's a;" Sissy whispered the awful word; "a clown."

"To make the people laugh?" said Louisa, with a nod of intelligence.

"Yes. But they wouldn't laugh sometimes, and then father cried. Lately, they very often wouldn't laugh, and he used to come home despairing. Father's not like most. Those who didn't know him as well as I do, and didn't love him as dearly as I do, might believe he was not quite right. Sometimes they played tricks upon him; but they never knew how he felt them, and shrunk up, when he was alone with me. He was far, far timider than they thought!"

"And you were his comfort through every thing?"

She nodded, with the tears rolling down her face. "I hope so, and father said I was. It was because he grew so scared and trembling, and because he felt himself to be a poor, weak, ignorant, helpless man, (those used to be his words,) that he wanted me so much to know a great deal and be different from him. I used to read to him to cheer his courage, and he was very fond of that. They were wrong books—I am never to speak of them here—but we didn't know there was any harm in them."

"And he liked them?" said Louisa, with her searching gaze on Sissy all this time.

"O very much! They kept him, many times, from what did him real harm. And often and often of a night, he used to forget all his troubles in wondering whether the Sultan would let the lady go on with the story, or would have her head cut off before it was finished."

"And your father was always kind? To the last?" asked Louisa; contravening the great principle, and wondering very much.

"Always, always!" returned Sissy, clasping her hands. "Kinder and kinder than I can tell. He was angry only one night, and that was not to me, but Merrylegs. Merrylegs;"



she whispered the awful fact; "is his performing dog?"

"Why was he angry with the dog?" Louisa demanded.

"Father, soon after they came home from performing, told Merrylegs to jump up on the backs of the two chairs and stand across them, which is one of his tricks. He looked at father, and didn't do it at once. Everything of father's had gone wrong that night, and he hadn't pleased the public at all. He cried out that the very dog knew he was failing, and had no compassion on him. Then he beat the dog, and I was frightened, and said—"Father, father! Pray don't hurt the creature who is so fond of you! O Heaven forgive you, father, stop!" And he stopped, and the dog was bloody, and father lay down crying on the floor with the dog in his arms, and the dog licked his face."

Louisa saw that she was sobbing; and going to her, kissed her, took her hand, and sat down beside her.

"Finish by telling me how your father left you, Sissy. Now that I have asked you so much, tell me the end. The blame, if there is any blame, is mine: not yours."

"Dear Miss Louisa," said Sissy, covering her eyes, and sobbing yet; "I came home from the school that afternoon, and found poor father just come home too, from the booth.—And he sat rocking himself over the fire as if he was in pain. And I said, 'Have you hurt yourself, father?' (as he did sometimes, like they all did), and he said 'A little, my darling.' And when I came to stoop down and look up at his face, I saw that he was crying. The more I spoke to him, the more he hid his face; and at first he shook all over, and said nothing but 'My darling!' and 'My love!'"

Here Tom came lounging in, and stared at the two with a coolness not particularly savoring of interest in anything but himself, and not much of that at present.

"I am asking Sissy a few questions, Tom," observed his sister. "You have no occasion to go away; but don't interrupt us for a moment, Tom dear."

"Oh! very well!" returned Tom. "Only father has brought old Bounderby home, and I want you to come into the drawing-room. Because if you come, there's a good chance of old Bounderby's asking me to dinner; and if you don't, there's none."

"I'll come directly."

"I'll wait for you," said Tom, "to make sure."

Sissy resumed in a lower voice. "At last poor father said that he had given no satisfaction again, and never did give any satisfaction now, and that he was a shame and disgrace, and I should have done better without him all along. I said all the affectionate things to him that came into my heart, and presently he was quiet and I sat down by him, and told him all about the school and every-

thing that had been said and done there. When I had no more left to tell, he put his arms round my neck, and kissed me a great many times. Then he asked me to fetch some of the stuff he used, for the little hurt he had had, and to get it at the best place, which was at the other end of town from there; and then, after kissing me again, he let me go. When I had gone down stairs, I turned back that I might be a little bit more company to him yet, and looked in at the door, and said, 'Father dear, shall I take Merrylegs?' Father shook his head and said, 'No, Sissy, no; take nothing that's known to be mine, my darling; and I left him sitting by the fire. Then the thought must have come upon him, poor, poor father! of going away to try something for my sake; for, when I came back, he was gone."

"I say! Look sharp for old Bounderby, Loo!" Tom remonstrated.

"There's no more to tell, Miss Louisa. I keep the nine oils ready for him, and I know he will come back. Every letter that I see in Mr. Gradgrind's hand takes my breath away and blinds my eyes, for I think it comes from father, or from Mr. Sleary about father. Mr. Sleary promised to write as soon as ever father should be heard of, and I trust to him to keep his word."

"Do look sharp for old Bounderby, Loo!" said Tom, with an impatient whistle. "He'll be off, if you don't look sharp!"

After this, whenever Sissy dropped a curtsey to Mr. Gradgrind in the presence of his family, and said in a faltering way, "I beg your pardon, sir, for being troublesome—but—have you had any letter yet about me?" Louisa would suspend the occupation of the moment, whatever it was, and look for the reply as earnestly as Sissy did. And when Mr. Gradgrind regularly answered, "No, Jupe, nothing of the sort," the trembling of Sissy's lip would be repeated in Louisa's face, and her eyes would follow Sissy with compassion to the door. Mr. Gradgrind usually improved these occasions by remarking, when she was gone, that if Jupe had been properly trained from an early age, she would have demonstrated to herself on sound principles the baselessness of these fantastic hopes. Yet it did seem (though not to him, for he saw nothing of it), as if fantastic hope could take as strong a hold as Fact.

This observation must be limited exclusively to his daughter. As to Tom, he was becoming that not unprecedented triumph of calculation which is usually at work on number one. As to Mrs. Gradgrind, if she said anything on the subject, she would come a little way out of her wrappers, like a feminine dormouse, and say:

"Good gracious bless me, how my poor head is vexed and worried by that girl Jupe's so perseveringly asking, over and over again, about her tiresome letters! Upon my word and honor, I seem to be fated, and destined, and ordained, to live in the midst of things that

I am never to hear the last of. It really is a most extraordinary circumstance that it appears as if I never was to hear the last of anything!"

At about this point, Mr. Gradgrind's eye would fall upon her; and under the influence of that wintry piece of fact, she would become torpid again.

## CHAPTER X.

I entertain a weak idea that the English people are as hard-worked as any people upon whom the sun shines. I acknowledge to this ridiculous idiosyncrasy, as a reason why I would give them a little more play.

In the hardest working part of Coketown; in the innermost fortifications of that ugly citadel, where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in; at the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon courts, and close streets upon streets, which had come into existence piecemeal, every piece in a violent hurry for some one man's purpose, and the whole an unnatural family, shouldering, and trampling, and pressing one another to death; in the last close nook of this great exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draught, were built in an immense variety of stunted and crooked shapes, as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might be expected to be born in it; among the multitude of Coketown, generically called "the Hands,"—a race who would have found more favor with some people, if Providence had seen fit to make them only hands, or like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomachs—lived a certain Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age.

Stephen looked older, but he had had a hard life. It is said that every life has its roses and thorns; there seemed, however, to have been a misadventure or mistake in Stephen's case, whereby somebody else had become possessed of his roses, and he had become possessed of the same somebody else's thorns in addition to his own. He had known, to use his words, a peck of trouble. He was usually called Old Stephen, in a kind of rough homage to the fact.

A rather stooping man, with a knitted brow, a pondering expression of face, and a hard-looking head sufficiently capacious, on which his iron-grey hair lay long and thin, Old Stephen might have passed for a particularly intelligent man in his condition. Yet he was not. He took no place among those remarkable "Hands," who, piecing together their broken intervals of leisure through many years, had mastered difficult sciences, and acquired a knowledge of most unlikely things. He held no station among the Hands who could make speeches and carry on debates. Thousands of his compeers could talk much better than he at any time. He was a good power-loom weaver, and a man of perfect integrity. What

more he was, or what else he had in him, if anything, let him show for himself.

The lights in the great factories, which looked, when they were illuminated, like Fairy palaces—or the travellers by express train said so—were all extinguished; and the bells had rung for knocking off for the night, and had ceased again; and the hands, men and women, boy and girl, were clattering home. Old Stephen was standing in the street, with the odd sensation upon him which the stoppage of the machinery always produced—the sensation of its having worked and stopped in his own head.

"Yet I don't see Rachael, still!" said he.

It was a wet night, and many groups of young women passed him, with their shawls drawn over their bare heads and held close under their chins to keep the rain out. He knew Rachael well, for a glance at any one of these groups was sufficient to show him that she was not there. At last, there were no more to come; and then he turned away, saying in a tone of disappointment, "Why, then, I ha' missed her!"

But, he had not gone the length of three streets, when he saw another of the shawled figures in advance of him, at which he looked so keenly that perhaps its mere shadow indistinctly reflected on the wet pavement—if he could have seen it without the figure itself moving along from lamp to lamp, brightening and fading as it went—would have been enough to tell him who was there—Making his pace at once much quicker and much softer, he darted on until he was very near this figure, then fell into his former walk, and called "Rachael!"

She turned, being then in the brightness of a lamp; and raising her hood a little, showed a quiet oval face, dark and rather delicate, irradiated by a pair of very gentle eyes, and further set off by the perfect order of her shining black hair. It was not a face in its first bloom; she was a woman five and thirty years of age.

"Ah, lad! 'Tis thou?" when she had said this, with a smile which would have been quite expressed, though nothing of her had been seen but her pleasant eyes, she replaced her hood again, and they went on together.

"I thought thou wast ahind me, Rachael?"

"No."

"Early t'night, lass?"

"Times I'm a little early, Stephen; times a little late. I'm never to be counted on, going home."

"Nor going t'other way, neither, 't seems to me, Rachael?"

"No, Stephen."

He looked at her with some disappointment in his face, but with a respectful and patient conviction that she must be right in whatever she did. The expression was not lost upon her; she laid her hand lightly on his arm a moment, as if to thank him for it.

"We are such true friends, lad, and such old

friends, and getting to be such old folk, now."

"No, Rachael, thou'rt as young as ever thou wast."

"One of us would be puzzled how to get old, Stephen, without t'other getting so too, both being alive," she answered, laughing; "but, any ways, we're such old friends, that t'hide a word of honest truth fra' one another would be a sin and a pity. 'Tis better not to walk too much together. 'Times, yes! 'Twould be hard, indeed, if 'twas not to be at all," she said, with a cheerfulness she sought to communicate to him.

"'Tis hard, any ways, Rachael."

"Try to think not; and 'twill seem better."

"I've tried a long time, and 'ta'nt got better. But thou'rt right; 't might make folk talk, even of thee. Thou hast been that to me, Rachael, through so many year: thou hast done me so much good, and heartened of me in that cheering way: that thy word is a law to me. Ah, lass, and a bright good law! Better than some real ones."

"Never fret about them, Stephen," she answered quickly, and not without an anxious glance at his face. "Let the laws be."

"Yes," he said, with a slow nod or two. "Let 'em be. Let everything be. Let all sorts alone. 'Tis a muddle, and that's all."

"Always a muddle?" said Rachael, with another gentle touch upon his arm, as if to recall him out of the thoughtfulness, in which he was biting the long ends of his loose neckerchief as he walked along. The touch had its instantaneous effect. He let them fall, turned a smiling face upon her, and said, as he broke into a good humored laugh, "Ay, Rachael, lass, awlus a muddle. That's where I stick. I come to the muddle many times and agen, and I never get beyond it."

They had walked some distance, and were near their own homes. The woman's was the first reached. It was in one of the many small streets for which the favorite undertaker (who turned a handsome sum out of the one poor ghastly pomp of the neighborhood) kept a black ladder, in order that those who had done their daily groping up and down the narrow stairs might slide out of this working world by the windows. She stopped at the corner, and putting her hand in his, wished him good night.

"Good night, dear lass; good night!"

She went, with her neat figure and her sober womanly step, down the dark street, and he stood looking after her until she turned into one of the small houses. There was not a flutter of her coarse shawl, perhaps, but had its interest in this man's eyes; not a tone of her voice but had its echo in his innermost heart.

When she was lost to his view, he pursued his homeward way, glancing up sometimes at the sky, where the clouds were sailing fast and wildly. But they were broken now, and the rain had ceased, and the moon shone—looking down the high chimneys of Coketown,

on the deep furnaces below, and casting Titanic shadows of the steam engines at rest, upon the walls where they were lodged. The man seemed to have brightened with the night, as he went on.

His home, in such another street as the first, saving that it was narrower, was over a little shop. How it came to pass that any people found it worth their while to sell or buy the wretched little toys, mixed up in its window with cheap newspapers and perk (there was a leg to be raffled for to-morrow night), matters not here. He took his end of candle from a shelf, lighted it at another end of candle on the counter, without disturbing the mistress of the shop who was asleep in her little room, and went up stairs into his lodging.

It was a room, not unacquainted with the black ladder under various tenants; but as neat, at present, as such a room could be. A few books and writings were on an old bureau in a corner, the furniture was decent and sufficient, and, though the atmosphere was tainted, the room was clean.

Going to the hearth to set the candle down upon a round three-legged table standing there, he stumbled against something. As he recoiled, looking down at it, it raised itself up into the form of a woman in a sitting attitude.

"Heaven's mercy, woman!" he cried, falling farther off from the figure: "Hast thou come back again!"

Such a woman! A disabled, drunken creature, barely able to preserve the sitting posture by steadying herself with one begrimed hand on the floor, while the other was so purposeless in trying to push away her tangled hair from her face, that it only blinded her the more with the dirt upon it. A creature so foul to look at, in her tatters, stains, and splashes, but so much fouler than that in her moral infamy, that it was a shameful thing even to see her.

After an impatient oath or two, and some stupid clawing of herself with the hand not necessary to her support, she got her hair away from her eyes sufficiently to obtain a sight of him. Then she sat swaying her body to and fro, and making gestures with her unnerved arm, which seemed intended as the accompaniment to a fit of laughter, though her face was stolid and drowsy.

"Eigh lad? What, yo'r there?" Some hoarse sounds meant for this, came mockingly out of her at last; and her head dropped forward on her breast.

"Back agen?" she screeched, after some minutes, as if he had that moment said it. "Yes! And back agen. Back agen ever and ever so often. Back? Yes, back. Why not?"

Roused by the unmeaning violence with which she cried it out, she scrambled up, and stood supporting herself with her shoulders against the wall; dangling in one hand by the string, a dunghill fragment of a bonnet, and trying to look scornfully at him.

"I'll sell thee off again, and I'll sell thee off



again, and I'll sell thee off a score of times!" she cried, with something between a furious menace and an effort at a defiant dance. "Come awa' from th' bed!" He was sitting on the side of it, with his face hidden in his hands. "Come awa' from 't. 'Tis mine, and I've a right to 't!"

As she staggered to it, he avoided her with a shudder, and passed—his face still hidden—to the opposite end of the room. She threw herself upon the bed heavily, and soon was snoring hard. He sunk into a chair, and moved but once all that night. It was to throw a covering over her; as if his hands were not enough to hide her, even in the darkness.

## CHAPTER XI.

The Fairy palaces, burst out into illumination, before pale morning, showed the monstrous serpents of smoke trailing themselves over Coketown. A clattering of clogs upon the pavement; a rapid ringing of bells; and all the melancholy-mad elephants, polished and oiled up for the day's monotony, were at their heavy exercise again.

Stephen bent over his loom, quiet, watchful, and steady. A special contrast, as every man was in the forest of looms where Stephen worked, to the crashing, smashing, tearing piece of mechanism at which he labored.—Never fear, good people of an anxious turn of mind that Art will consign Nature to oblivion. Set anywhere, side by side, the work of God and the work of man; and the former, even though it be a troop of Hands of very small account, will gain in solemn dignity from the comparison.

Four hundred and more Hands in this Mill; Two hundred and fifty horse Steam Power. It is known, to the force of a single pound weight, what the engine will do; but, not all the calculators of the National Debt can tell me the capacity for good or evil, for love or hatred, for patriotism or discontent, for the decomposition of virtue into vice, or the reverse, at any single moment in the soul of one of these its quiet servants, with the composed faces and the regulated actions. There is no mystery in it; there is an unfathomable mystery in the meanest of them, for ever. Supposing we were to reserve our arithmetic for material objects, and to govern these awful unknown quantities by other means!

The day grew strong, and showed itself outside, even against the flaming lights within. The lights were turned out, and the work went on. The rain fell, and the Smoke-serpents, submissive to the curse of all that tribe, trailed themselves upon the earth. In the wasteyard outside, the steam from the escape-pipe, the litter of barrels and old iron, the shining heaps of coals, the ashes everywhere, were shrouded in a veil of mist and rain.

The work went on, until the noon-bell rang. More clattering upon the pavements.

The looms, and wheels, and Hands, all out of gear for an hour.

Stephen came out of the hot mill into the damp wind and the cold wet streets, haggard and worn. He turned from his own class and his own quarter, taking nothing but a little bread as he walked along, towards the hill on which his principal employer lived, in a red house with black outside shutters, green inside blinds, a black street door, up two white steps, BOUNDERBY (in letters very like himself) upon a brazen plate, and a round brazen door-handle underneath it like a brazen full-stop.

Mr. Bounderby was at his lunch. So Stephen had expected. Would his servant say that one of the Hands begged leave to speak to him? Message in return, requiring name of such Hand. Stephen Blackpool. There was nothing troublesome against Stephen Blackpool; yes, he might come in.

Stephen Blackpool in the parlor. Mr. Bounderby (whom he just knew by sight), at lunch on chop and sherry. Mrs. Sparsit netting at the fireside, in a side-saddle attitude, with one foot in a cotton stirrup. It was a part, at once of Mrs. Sparsit's dignity and service, not to lunch. She supervised the meal officially, but implied that in her own stately person she considered lunch a weakness.

"Now, Stephen," said Mr. Bounderby, "what's the matter with *you*?"

Stephen made a bow. Not a servile one—these Hands will never do that! Lord bless you, sir, you'll never catch them at that, if they have been with you twenty years!—and, as a complimentary toilet for Mrs. Sparsit, tucked his neckerchief ends into his waistcoat.

"Now, you know," said Mr. Bounderby, taking some sherry, "we have never had any difficulty with you, and you have never been one of the unreasonable ones. You don't expect to be set up in a coach and six, and to be fed on turtle-soup and venison, with a gold spoon, as a good many of 'em do;" Mr. Bounderby always represented this to be the sole, immediate, and direct object of any Hand who was not entirely satisfied; "and therefore I know already that you have not come here to make a complaint. Now, you know, I am certain of that, before hand."

"No, sir, sure I ha' not coom for nowt o' th' kind."

Mr. Bounderby seemed agreeably surprised, notwithstanding his previous strong conviction. "Very well," he returned. "You're a steady Hand, and I was not mistaken. Now, let me hear what it's all about. As it's not that, let me hear what it is. What have you got to say? Out with it, lad!"

Stephen happened to glance towards Mrs. Sparsit. "I can go, Mr. Bounderby, if you wish it," said that self-sacrificing lady, making a feint of taking her foot out of the stirrup.

Mr. Bounderby stayed her, by holding a mouthful of chop in suspension before swal-

lowing it, and putting out his left hand. Then, withdrawing his hand and swallowing his mouthful of chop, he said to Stephen:

"Now, you know, this good lady is a born lady, a high lady. You are not to suppose because she keeps my house for me, that she hasn't been very high up the tree—ah, up at the top of the tree! Now, if you have got anything to say that can't be said before a born lady, this lady will leave the room. If what you have got to say, *can* be said before a born lady, this lady will stay where she is."

"Sir, I hope I never had nowt to say not fitten for a born lady to hear, sin' I were born mysen'," was the reply, accompanied with a slight flush.

"Very well," said Mr. Bounderby, pushing away his plate, and leaning back. "Fire away!"

"I ha' coom," Stephen began, raising his eyes from the floor, after a moment's consideration, "to ask yo' advice. I need't over-much. I were married on a Eas'r Mondy nineteen year sin', long and dree. She were a young lass—pretty enow—wi' good accounts of hersen'. Well! She went bad—soon. Not along of me. Gonnows I were not a nikiud husband to her."

"I have heard all this before," said Mr. Bounderby. "She found other companions, took to drinking, left off working, sold the furniture, pawned the clothes, and played old Gooseberry."

"I were patient wi' her."

"(The more fool you, I think," said Mr. Bounderby, in confidence to his wine-glass.)

"I were very patient wi' her. I tried to wean her fra't, ower and ower agen. I tried this, I tried that, I tried t'oother. I ha' gone home many's the time, and found all vanished as I had in the world, and her without a sense left to bless hersen' lying on bare ground. I ha' don't not once, not twice—twenty time!"

Every line in his face deepened as he said it, and put in its affecting evidence of the suffering he had undergone.

"From bad to worse, from worse to worse. She left me. She disgraced hersen' every-ways, bitter and bad. She coom back, she coom back, she coom back. What could I do t' hinder her? I ha' walked the streets nights long, ere ever I'd go home. I ha' gone t' th' brigg, minded to fling mysen' ower, and ha' no more on't. I ha' bore that much, that I were owd when I were young."

Mrs. Sparsit, easily ambling along with her netting-needles, raised the Coriolanian eyebrows and shook her head, as much as to say, "The great know trouble as well as the small. Please to turn your humble eye in My direction."

"I ha' paid her to keep awa' fra' me. These five year I ha' paid her. I ha' gotten decent fewtrils about me agen. I ha' lived hard and sad, but not ashamed and fearfo' a' the minuits o' my life. Last night, I went home.

There she lay upon my harston! There she is!"

In the strength of his misfortune, and the energy of his distress, he fired for the moment like a proud man. In another moment, he stood as he had stood all the time—his usual stoop upon him; his pondering face addressed to Mr. Bounderby, with a curious expression on it, half-shrewd, half-perplexed, as it his mind were set upon unravelling something very difficult; his hat held tight in his left hand, which rested on his hip; his right arm, with a rugged propriety and force of action, very earnestly emphasising what he said; not least so when it always paused, a little bent, but not withdrawn, as he paused.

"I was acquainted with all this, you know," said Mr. Bounderby, "except the last clause, long ago. It's a bad job; that's what it is. You had better have been satisfied as you were, and not have got married. However, it's too late to say that."

"Was it an unequal marriage, sir, in point of years?" asked Mrs. Sparsit.

"You hear what this lady asks. Was it an unequal marriage in point of years, this unlucky job of yours?" said Mr. Bounderby.

"Not e'en so. I was one-and-twenty mysen'; she were twenty nightbout."

"Indeed, sir?" said Mrs. Sparsit to her Chief, with great placidity. "I inferred, from its being so miserable a marriage, that it was probably an unequal one in point of years."

Mr. Bounderby looked very hard at the good lady in a sidelong way that had an odd sheepishness about it. He fortified himself with a little more sherry.

"Well! Why don't you go on?" he then asked, turning rather irritably on Stephen Blackpool.

"I ha' coom to ask yo, sir, how I am to be ridden o' this woman." Stephen inflicted a yet deeper gravity into the mixed expression of his attentive face. Mrs. Sparsit uttered a gentle ejaculation, as having received a moral shock.

"What do you mean?" said Bounderby, getting up to lean his back against the chimney-piece. "What are you talking about? You took her, for better for worse."

"I mun' be ridden o' her. I cannot hear't nommore. I ha' lived under't so long, for that I ha' had'n the pity and the comforting words o' th' best lass living or dead. Haply, but for her, I should ha' gone hottering mad."

"He wishes to be free, to marry the female of whom he speaks, I fear, sir," observed Mrs. Sparsit in an under-tone, and much dejected by the immorality of the people.

"I do. The lady says what's right. I do. I were a coming to't. I ha' read i' th' papers that great folk (their faw 'em a'! I wishes 'em no hurt!) are not bonded together for better for worse so fast, but that they can be set free tra' their misfortnet marriages, and marry ower agen. When they dunnot agree, for that their tempers is ill-sorted, they have rooms of

one kind an' another in their houses, and they can live asunders. We fok ha' only one room, and we can't. When that won't do, they ha' gowd and other cash, and they can say, 'This for yo, and that for me,' and they can go their separate ways. We can't. Spite o' all that, they can be set free for smaller wrongs than is suffered by hundreds an' hundreds of us—by women fur more than men—they can be set free for smaller wrongs than mine. So, I mun be ridden o' this wife o' mine, and I want t' know how?"

"No how," returned Mr. Bounderby.

"If I do her any hurt, sir, there's a law to punish me?"

"Of course there is."

"If I flee from her, there's a law to punish me?"

"Of course there is."

"If I marry t'other dear lass, there's a law to punish me!"

"Of course there is."

"If I was to live wi' her an' not marry her—saying such a thing could be, which it never could or would, an' her so good—there's a law to punish me, in every innocent chilt belonging to me?"

"Of course there is."

"Now, a' God's name," said Stephen Blackpool, "show me the law to help me!"

"There's a sanctity in this relation of life," said Mr. Bounderby, "and—and—it must be kept up."

"No no, dunnot say that, sir. 'Tan't kep' up that way. Not that way. 'Tis kep' down that way. I'm a weaver, I were in a factry when a chilt, but I ha' gotten een to see wi' and eern to hear wi'. I read in th' papers, every 'Sizes, every Sessions—and you read too—I know it! with dismay—how th' impossibility o' ever getting unchained from one another, at any price, on any terms, brings blood upon this land, and brings many common married fok (agen I say, women fur o'ener than men) to battle, murder, and sudden death. Let us ha' this, right understood. Mine's a grievous case, an' I want—if yo will be so good—t' know the law that helps me."

"Now, I tell you what!" said Mr. Bounderby, putting his hands in his pockets. "There is such a law."

Stephen, subsiding into his quiet manner, and never wandering in his attention, gave a nod.

"But it's not for you at all. It costs money. It costs a mint of money."

How much might that be? Stephen calmly asked.

"Why, you'd have to go to Doctors' Commons with a suit, and you'd have to go to a court of Common Law with a suit, and you'd have to go to the House of Lords with a suit, and you'd have to get an Act of Parliament to enable you to marry again, and it would cost you (if it was a case of very plain-sailing), I suppose from a thousand to fifteen hundred pound," said Mr. Bouncerby. "Perhaps twice the money."

"There's no other law?"

"Certainly not."

"Why then, sir," said Stephen, turning white, and motioning with that right hand of his, as if he gave everything to the four winds, "'Tis a muddle. 'Tis just a muddle a'together, an' the sooner I am dead, the better."

(Mrs. Sparsit again dejected by the impiety of the people.)

"Pooh, pooh! Don't you talk nonsense, my good fellow," said Mr. Bounderby, "about things you don't understand; and don't you call the Institutions of your country a muddle, or you'll get yourself into a real muddle one of these fine mornings. The Institutions of your country are not your piecework, and the only thing you have got to do, is, to mind your piece-work. You didn't take your wife for fast and for loose; but for better for worse. If she has turned out worse—why, all we have got to say is, she might have turned out better."

"'Tis a muddle," said Stephen, shaking his head as he moved to the door. "'Tis 'a muddle!"

"Now, I'll tell you what" Mr. Bounderby resumed, as a valedictory address. "With what I shall call your unhallowed opinions, you have been quite shocking this lady: who, as I have already told you, is a born lady, and who, as I have not already told you, has had her own marriage misfortunes to the tune of tens of thousands of pounds—tens of Thousands of Pounds!" (he repeated it with great relish.) "Now, you have always been a steady Hand hitherto; but my opinion is, and so I tell you plainly, that you are turning into the wrong road. You have been listening to some mischievous stranger or other—they're always about—and the best thing you can do is, to come out of that. Now, you understand;" here his countenance expressed marvellous acuteness; "I can see as far into a grindstone as another man; farther than a good many, perhaps, because I had my nose well kept to it when I was young. I see traces of the turtle soup, and venison, and gold spoon in this. Yes, I do!" cried Mr. Bounderby, shaking his head with obstinate cunning. "By the Lord Harry, I do!"

With a very different shake of the head, and a deep sigh, Stephen said, "Thank you, sir, I wish you good day." So, he left Mr. Bounderby swelling at his own portrait on the wall, as if he were going to explode himself into it; and Mrs. Sparsit still ambling on with her foot in her stirrup, looking quite cast down by the popular vices.

## CHAPTER XII.

Old Stephen descended the two white steps, shutting the black door with the brazen door-plate, by the aid of the brazen full-stop, to which he gave a parting polish with the sleeve of his coat, observing that his hot hand clouded it. He crossed the street with his eyes bent upon the ground, and thus was walking



sorrowfully away, when he felt a touch upon his arm.

It was not the touch he needed most at such a moment—the touch that could calm the wild waters of his soul, as the uplifted hand of the sublimest love and patience could abate the raging of the sea—yet it was a woman's hand too. It was an old woman, tall and shapely still, though withered by Time, on whom his eyes fell when he stopped and turned. She was very cleanly and plainly dressed, had country mud upon her shoes, and was newly come from a journey. The flutter of her manner, in the unwonted noise of the streets; the spare shawl, carried unfolded on her arm; the heavy umbrella, and little basket; the loose long-fingered gloves, to which her hands were unused; all bespoke an old woman from the country, in her plain holiday clothes, come into Coketown on an expedition of rare occurrence. Remarking this at a glance, with the quick observation of his class, Stephen Blackpool bent his attentive face—his face, which, like the faces of many of his order, by dint of long working with eyes and hands in the midst of a prodigious noise, had acquired the concentrated look with which we are familiar in the countenances of the deaf—the better to hear what she asked him.

"Pray, sir," said the old woman, "didn't I see you come out of that gentleman's house?" pointing back to Mr. Bounderby's. "I believe it was you, unless I have had the bad luck to mistake the person in following?"

"Yes, missus," returned Stephen, "it were me."

"Have you—you'll excuse an old woman's curiosity—have you seen the gentleman?"

"Yes, missus."

"And how did he look, sir? Was he portly, bold, outspoken, hearty?" As she straightened her own figure, and held up her head in adapting her action to her words, the idea crossed Stephen that he had seen this old woman before, and had not quite liked her.

"O yes," he returned, observing her more attentively, "he were all that."

"And healthy," said the old woman, "as the fresh wind?"

"Yes," returned Stephen. "He were ett'n and drinking—as large and as loud as a Hum-mobee."

"Thank you!" said the old woman with infinite content. "Thank you!"

He certainly never had seen this old woman before. Yet there was a vague remembrance in his mind, as if he had more than once dreamed of some old woman like her.

She walked along at his side, and, gently accommodating himself to her humor, he said Coketown was a busy place, was it not? To which she answered, "Eigh sure! Dreadful busy!" Then he said, she came from the country, he saw? To which she answered in the affirmative.

"By Parliamentary, this morning. I came

forty mile by Parliamentary this morning, and I'm going back the same forty mile this afternoon. I walked nine miles to the station this morning, and if I find nobody on the road to give me a lift, I shall walk the nine mile back to night. That's pretty well, sir, at my age!" said the chatty old woman, her eyes brightening with exultation.

"Deed 'tis. Don't do 't too often, missus."

"No, no. Once a year," she answered, shaking her head. "I spend my savings so, once every year. I come, regular, to tramp about the streets, and see the gentlemen."

"Only to see 'em?" returned Stephen.

"That's enough for me," she replied, with great earnestness and interest of manner. "I ask no more! I have been standing about, on this side of the way, to see that gentleman," turning her head back towards Mr. Bounderby's again, "come out. But, he's late this year, and I have not seen him. You came out, instead. Now, if I am obliged to go back without a glimpse of him—I only want a glimpse—well! I have seen you, and you have seen him, and I must make that do." Saying this, she looked at Stephen as if to fix his features in her mind, and her eyes were not so bright as they had been.

With a large allowance for difference of tastes, and with all submission to the patricians of Coketown, this seemed so extraordinary a source of interest to take so much trouble about, that it perplexed him. But they were passing the church now, and as his eye caught the clock, he quickened his pace.

He was going to his work? the old woman said, quickening hers, too, quite easily. Yes, time was nearly out. On his telling her where he worked, the old woman became a more singular old woman than before.

"Ain't you happy?" she asked him.

"Why—there's—awmost nobbody but has their troubles; missus." He answered evasively, because the old woman appeared to take it for granted, that he would be very happy indeed, and he had not the heart to disappoint her. He knew that there was trouble enough in the world; and if the old woman had lived so long, and could count upon his having so little, why so much the better for her, and none the worse for him.

"Ay, ay! You have your troubles at home, you mean?" she said.

"Times. Just now and then," he answered slightly.

"But, working under such a gentleman, they don't follow you to the Factory?"

No, no; they didn't follow him there, said Stephen. All correct there. Everything accordant there. (He did not go so far as to say, for her pleasure, that there was a sort of Divine Right there; but, I have heard claims almost as magnificent of late years.)

They were now in the black bye-road near the place, and the Hands were crowding in. The bell was ringing, and the Serpent was a Serpent of many coils, and the Elephant was

getting ready. The strange old woman was delighted with the very bell. It was the beautifullest bell she had ever heard, she said, and sounded grand!

She asked him, when he stopped, good naturedly, to shake hands with her before going in, how long he had worked there?

"A dozen year," he told her.

"I must kiss the hand," said she, "that has worked in this fine factory for a dozen year!" And she lifted it, though he would have prevented her, and put it to her lips. What harmony, besides her age and her simplicity, surrounded her, he did not know, but even in this fantastic action there was a something neither out of time nor place; a something which it seemed as if nobody else could have made as serious, or done with such a natural and touching air.

He had been at his loom full half an hour, thinking about this old woman, when, having occasion to move round the loom for its adjustment, he glanced through a window which was in his corner, and saw her still looking up at the pile of building, lost in admiration. Heedless of the smoke, and mud and wet, and of her two long journeys, she was gazing at it, as if the heavy thrum that issued from its many stories were proud music to her.

She was gone by and by, and the day went after her, and the lights sprung up again, and the Express whirled in full sight of the Fairy Palace over the arches near; little felt amid the jarring of the machinery, and scarcely heard above its crash and rattle. Long before then, his thoughts had gone back to the dreary room above the littleshop, and to the shameful figure heavy on the bed, but heavier on his heart.

Machinery slackened; throbbing feebly like a fainting pulse; stopped. The bell again; the glare of light and heat dispelled; the factories, looming heavy in the black wet night; their tall chimneys rising up into the air like competing Towers of Babel.

He had spoken to Rachael only last night, it was true, and had walked with her a little way; but he had his new misfortune on him, in which no one else could give him a moment's relief, and, for the sake of it, and because he knew himself to want that softening of his anger which no voice but hers could effect, he felt he might so far disregard what she had said as to wait for her again. He waited, but she had eluded him. She was gone. On no other night in the year, could he so ill have spared her patient face.

O! Better to have no home in which to lay his head, than to have a home and dread to go to it, through such a cause. He ate and drank, for he was exhausted—but, he little knew or cared what; and he wandered about in the chill rain, thinking and thinking, and brooding and brooding.

No word of a new marriage had ever passed between them; but Rachael had taken great pity on him years ago, and to her alone he had opened his closed heart all this

time, on the subject of his miseries; and he knew very well that, if he were free to ask her, she would take him. He thought of the home he might at that moment have been seeking with pleasure and pride; of the different man he might have been that night; of the lightness then in his now heavy-laden breast; of the then restored honor, self-respect, and tranquillity, now all torn to pieces. He thought of the waste of the best part of his life, of the change it made in his character for the worse every way, of the dreadful nature of his existence, bound hand and foot to a dead woman, and tormented by a demon in her shape. He thought of Rachael, how young when they were first brought together in these circumstances, how mature now, how soon to grow old. He thought of the number of girls and women she had seen marry, how many homes with children in them she had seen grow up around her, how she had contentedly pursued her own lone quiet path—for him—and how he had sometimes seen a shade of melancholy on her blessed face, that smote him with remorse and despair. He set the picture of her up, beside the infamous image of last night; and thought, Could it be, that the whole earthly course of one so gentle, good, and self-denying, was subjugate to such a wretch as that!

Filled with these thoughts—so filled that he had an unwholesome sense of growing larger, of being placed in some new and diseased relation towards the objects among which he passed, of seeing the iris around every misty light turn red—he went home for shelter.

### CHAPTER XIII.

A candle faintly burned in the window, to which the black ladder had often been raised for the sliding away of all that was most precious in this world to a striving wife and a brood of hungry babies; and Stephen added to his other thoughts the stern reflection, that of all the casualties of this existence upon earth, not one was dealt out with so unequal a hand as Death. The inequality of Birth was nothing to it. For, say that the child of a King and the child of a Weaver were born to-night in the same moment, what was that disparity, to the death of any human creature who was serviceable to, or beloved by, another, while this abandoned woman lived on!

From the outside of his home he gloomily passed to the inside, with suspended breath and with a slow footstep. He went up to his door, opened it, and so into the room.

Quiet and peace were there. Rachael was there, sitting by the bed.

She turned her head, and the light of her face shone in upon the midnight of his mind. She sat by the bed, watching and tending his wife. That is to say, he saw that some one lay there, and he knew too well it must be she; but Rachael's hands had put a curtain

up, so that she was screened from his eyes. Her disgraceful garments were removed, and some of Rachael's were in the room. Everything was in its place and order as he had always kept it, the little fire was newly trimmed, and the hearth was freshly swept. It appeared to him that he saw all this in Rachael's face, and looked at nothing besides.—While looking at it, it was shut out from his view by the softened tears that filled his eyes; but, not before he had seen how earnestly she looked at him, and how her own eyes were filled too.

She turned again towards the bed, and satisfying herself that all was quiet there, spoke in a low, calm, cheerful voice.

"I am glad you have come at last, Stephen. You are very late."

"I ha' been walking up an' down."

"I thought so. But 'tis too bad a night for that. The rain falls very heavy, and the wind has risen."

The wind? True. It was blowing hard. Hark to the thundering in the chimney, and the surging noise! To have been out in such a wind, and not to have known it was blowing!

"I have been here once before, to-day, Stephen. Landlady came round for me at dinner-time. There was some one here that needed looking to, she said. And 'deed she was right. All wandering and lost, Stephen. Wounded too, and bruised."

He slowly moved to a chair and sat down, drooping his head before her.

"I came to do what little I could, Stephen; first, for that she worked with me when we were girls both, and for that you courted her and married her when I was her friend—"

He laid his furrowed forehead on his hand, with a low groan.

"And next, for that I know your heart, and am right sure and certain 'tis far too merciful to let her die, or even so much as suffer, for want of aid. Thou knowest who said, 'Let him who is without sin among you, cast the first stone at her!' There have been plenty to do that. Thou art not the man to cast the last stone, Stephen, when she is brought so low."

"O Rachael, Rachael!"

"Thou hast been a cruel sufferer, Heaven reward thee!" she said, in compassionate accents. "I am thy poor friend, with all my heart and mind."

The wounds of which she had spoken, seemed to be about the neck of the self-made out-cast. She dressed them now, still without showing her. She steeped a piece of linen in a basin, into which she poured some liquid from a bottle, and laid it with a gentle hand upon the sore. The three-legged table had been drawn close to the bedside, and on it there were two bottles. This was one.

It was not so far off, but that Stephen, following her hands with his eyes, could read what was printed on it, in large letters. He

turned of a deadly hue, and a sudden horror seemed to fall upon him.

"I will stay here, Stephen," said Rachael, quietly resuming her seat, "till the bells go Three. 'Tis to be done again at three, and then she may be left till morning."

"But thy rest agen to-morrow's work, my dear."

"I slept sound, last night. I can wake many nights, when I am put to it. 'Tis thou who art in need of rest—so white and tired. Try to sleep in the chair there, while I watch. Thou hadst no sleep last night, I can well believe. To-morrow's work is far harder for thee than for me."

He heard the thundering and surging out of doors, and it seemed to him as if his late angry mood were going about trying to get at him. She had cast it out; she would keep it out; he trusted to her to defend him from himself.

"She don't know me, Stephen; she just drowsily mutters and stares. I have spoken to her times and again, but she don't notice! 'Tis as well so. When she comes to her right mind once more, I shall have done what I can, and she never the wiser."

"How long, Rachael, is't looked for, that she'll be so?"

"Doctor said she would haply come to her mind to-morrow."

His eyes again fell on the bottle, and a tremble passed over him, causing him to shiver in every limb. She thought he was chilled with the wet. "No," he said; "it was not that. He had had a fright."

"A fright?"

"Ay, ay! coming in. When I were walking. When I were thinking. When I—" It seized him again; and he stood up, holding by the mantel-shelf, as he pressed his dank cold hair down with a hand that shook as if it were palsied.

"Stephen!"

She was coming to him, but he stretched out his arm to stop her.

"No! Don't please; don't! Let me see thee setten by the bed. Let me see thee, a'so good, and so forgiving. Let me see thee as I see thee when I coom in. I can never see thee better than so. Never, never, never!"

He had a violent fit of trembling, and then sunk into his chair. After a time he controlled himself, and resting with an elbow on one knee, and his head upon that hand, could look towards Rachael. Seen across the dim candle with his moistened eyes, she looked as if she had a glory shining round her head. He could have believed she had. He did believe it, as the noise without shook the window, rattled at the door below, and went about the house clamoring and lamenting.

"When she gets better, Stephen, 'tis to be hoped she'll leave thee to thyself again, and do thee no more hurt. Anyways we will hope,



so now. And now I shall keep silence, for I want thee to sleep."

He closed his eyes, more to please her than to rest his weary head; but, by slow degrees as he listened to the great noise of the wind, he ceased to hear it, or it changed into the working of his loom, or even into the voices of the day (his own included) saying what had been really said. Even this imperfect consciousness faded away at last, and he dreamed a long, troubled dream.

He thought that he, and some one on whom his heart had long been set—but she was not Rachael, and that surprised him, even in the midst of his imaginary happiness—stood in the church being married. While the ceremony was performing, and while he recognised among the witnesses some whom he knew to be living, and many whom he knew to be dead, darkness came on, succeeded by the shining of a tremendous light. It broke from one line in the table of commandments at the altar, and illuminated the building with the words. They were sounded through the church, too, as if there were voices in the fiery letters. Upon this, the whole appearance before him and around him changed, and nothing was left as it had been, but himself and the clergyman. They stood in the daylight before a crowd so vast, that if all the people in the world could have been brought together into one space, they could not have looked, he thought, more numerous; and they all abhorred him, and there was not one pitying or friendly eye among the millions that were fastened on his face. He stood on a raised stage, under his own loom; and, looking up at the shape the loom took, and hearing the burial service distinctly read, he knew that he was there to suffer death. In an instant what he stood on fell below him, and he was gone.

Out of what mystery he came back to his usual life, and to places that he knew, he was unable to consider; but, he was back in those places by some means, and with this condemnation upon him, that he was never, in this world or the next, through all the unimaginable ages of eternity, to look on Rachael's face or hear her voice. Wandering to and fro, unceasingly, without hope, and in search of he knew not what (he only knew that he was doomed to seek it), he was the subject of a nameless, horrible dread, a mortal fear of one particular shape which everything took. Whatsoever he looked at, grew into that form sooner or later. The object of his miserable existence was to prevent its recognition by any one among the various people he encountered. Hopeless labor! If he led them out of rooms where it was, if he shut up drawers and closets where it stood, if he drew the curious from places where he knew it to be secreted, and got them out into the streets, the very chimneys of the mills assumed that shape, and round them was the printed word.

The wind was blowing again, the rain was

beating on the housetops, and the larger spaces through which he had strayed contracted to the four walls of his room. Saving that the fire had died out, it was as his eyes had closed upon it. Rachael seemed to have fallen into a doze, in the chair by the bed. She sat wrapped in her shawl, perfectly still. The table stood in the same place, close by the bedside, and on it, in its real proportions and appearance, was the shape so often repeated.

He thought he saw the curtain move. He looked again, and he was sure it moved. He saw a hand come forth, and grope about a little. Then the curtain moved more perceptibly, and the woman in the bed put it back, and sat up.

With her woful eyes, so haggard and wild, so heavy and large, she looked all round the room, and passed the corner where he slept in his chair. Her eyes returned to that corner, and she put her hand over them as a shade, while she looked into it. Again they went all around the room, scarcely heeding Rachael if at all, and returned to that corner. He thought, as she once more shaded them—not so much looking at him, as looking for him with a brutish instinct that he was there—that no single trace was left in those debauched features, or in the mind that went along with them, of the woman he had married eighteen years before. But that he had seen her come to this by inches, he never could have believed her to be the same.

All this time, as if a spell were on him, he was motionless and powerless, except to watch her.

Stupidly dozing, or communing with her incapable self about nothing, she sat for a little while with her hands at her ears, and her head resting on them. Presently, she resumed her staring round the room. And now, for the first time her eyes stopped at the table with the bottles on it.

Straightway she turned her eyes back to his corner, with the defiance of last night, and, moving very cautiously and softly, stretched out her greedy hand. She drew a mug into the bed, and sat for awhile considering which of the two bottles she should choose. Finally, she laid her insensate grasp upon the bottle that had swift and certain death in it, and before his eyes, pulled out the cork with her teeth.

Dream or reality, he had no voice, nor had he power to stir. If this be real, and her allotted time be not yet come, wake, Rachael, wake!

She thought of that, too. She looked at Rachael, and very slowly, very cautiously, poured out the contents. The draught was at her lips. A moment and she would be past all help, let the whole world wake and come about her with its utmost power. But, in that moment Rachael started up with a suppressed cry. The creature struggled, struck her, seized her by the hair; but Rachael had the cup.

Stephen broke out of his chair. "Rachael, am I wakin' or dreamin' this dreadful night!"

"Tis all well, Stephen. I have been asleep myself. 'Tis near three. Hush! I hear the bells."

The wind brought the sounds of the church clock to the window. They listened, and it struck three. Stephen looked at her, saw how pale she was, noted the disorder of her hair, and the red marks of fingers on her forehead, and felt assured that his senses of sight and hearing had been awaked. She held the cup in her hand even now.

"I thought it must be near three," she said, calmly pouring from the cup into the basin, and steeping the linen as before. "I am thankful I stayed! 'Tis done now, when I have put this on. There! And now she's quiet again. The few drops in the basin I'll pour away, for 'tis bad stuff to leave about, though ever so little of it." As she spoke, she drained the basin into the ashes of the fire, and broke the bottle on the hearth.

She had nothing to do, then, but to cover herself with her shawl before going out into the wind and rain.

"Thou'lt let me walk wi' thee at this hour, Rachael?"

"No, Stephen. 'Tis but a minute and I'm home."

"Thou'rt not fearfo'"; he said it in a low voice, as they went out at the door; "to leave me alone wi' her!"

As she looked at him, saying "Stephen?" he went down on his knee before her, on the poor mean stairs, and put an end of her shawl to his lips.

"Thou art an Angel. Bless thee, bless thee!"

"I am, as I have told thee, Stephen, thy poor friend. Angels are not like me. Between them, and a working woman fu' of faults, there is a deep gulf set. My little sister is among them, but she is changed."

She raised her eyes for a moment as she said the words; and then they fell again, in all their gentleness and mildness, on his face.

"Thou changest me from bad to good. Thou mak'st me humbly wishfo' to be more like thee, and fearfo' to lose thee when this life is ower, an' a' the muddle cleared awa'. Thou'rt an Angel; it may be, thou hast saved my soul alive!"

She looked at him, on his knee at her feet, with her shawl still in his hand, and the reproof on her lips died away when she saw the working of his face.

"I coom home desp'rate. I coom home wi'out a hope, and mad wi' thinking that when I said a word o' complaint, I was reckoned a unreasonable Hand. I told thee I had had a fright. It were the Poison-bottle on table. I never hurt a livin' creetur; but, happenin' so suddenly upon't, I thowt, 'How can I say what I might ha' done to mysen, or her, or both!'"

She put her two hands on his mouth, with

a face of terror, to stop him from saying more. He caught them in his unoccupied hand, and holding them, and still clasping the border of her shawl, said, hurriedly:

"But I see thee, Rachael, setten by the bed. I ha' seen thee a' this night. In my troublous sleep I ha' known thee still to be there. Evermore I will see thee there. I nevermore will see her or think o' her, but thou shalt be beside her. I nevermore will see or think o' anything that angers me, but thou, so much better than me, shalt be by th' side on't. And so I will try t' look t' th' time, and so I will try t' trust t' th' time, when thou and me at last shall walk together far awa', beyond the deep gulf, in th' country where thy little sister is."

He kissed the border of her shawl again, and let her go. She bade him good night in a broken voice, and went out into the street.

The wind blew from the quarter where the day would soon appear, and still blew strongly. It had cleared the sky before it, and the rain had spent itself or travelled elsewhere, and the stars were bright. He stood bare-headed in the road, watching her quick disappearance. As the shining stars were to the heavy candle in the window, so was Rachael, in the rugged fancy of this man, to the common experiences of his life.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Time went on in Coketown like its own machinery: so much material wrought up, so much fuel consumed, so many powers worn out, so much money made. But, less inexorable than iron, steel, and brass, it brought its varying seasons even into that wilderness of smoke and brick, and made the only stand that ever *was* made in the place against its direful uniformity.

"Louisa is becoming," said Mr. Gradgrind, "almost a young woman."

Time, with his innumerable horse-power, worked away, not minding what anybody said, and presently turned out young Thomas a foot taller than when his father had last taken particular notice of him.

"Thomas is becoming," said Mr. Gradgrind, "almost a young man."

Time passed Thomas on in the mill, while his father was thinking about it, and there he stood in a long tail-coat and a stiff shirt-collar.

"Really," said Mr. Gradgrind, "the period has arrived when Thomas ought to go to Bounderby."

Time, sticking to him, passed him on into Bounderby's Bank, made him an inmate of Bounderby's house, necessitated the purchase of his first razor, and exercised him diligently in his calculations relative to number one.

The same great manufacturer, always with an immense variety of work on hand, in every stage of development, passed Sissy onward in his mill, and worked her up into a very pretty article indeed.

"I fear, Jupe," said Mr. Gradgrind, "that your continuance at the school any longer, would be useless."

"I am afraid it would, sir," Sissy answered with a curtsy.

"I cannot disguise from you, Jupe," said Mr. Gradgrind, knitting his brow, "that the result of your probation there has disappointed me; has greatly disappointed me. You have not acquired, under Mr. and Mrs. M'Choakumchild, anything like that amount of exact knowledge which I looked for. You are extremely deficient in your facts. Your acquaintance with figures is very limited. You are altogether backward, and below the mark."

"I am sorry, sir," she returned; "but I know it is quite true. Yet I have tried hard, sir."

"Yes," said Mr. Gradgrind, "yes, I believe you have tried hard; I have observed you, and I can find no fault in that respect."

"Thank you, sir. I have thought sometimes;" Sissy very timid here; "that perhaps I tried to learn too much, and that if I had asked to be allowed to try a little less, I might have—"

"No, Jupe, no," said Mr. Gradgrind, shaking his head in his profoundest and most eminently practical way. "No. The course you pursued, you pursued according to the system—the system—and there is no more to be said about it. I can only suppose that the circumstances of your early life were too unfavorable to the development of your reasoning powers, and that we began too late. Still, as I have said already, I am disappointed."

"I wish I could have made a better acknowledgment, sir, of your kindness to a poor forlorn girl who had no claim upon you, and of your protection of her."

"Don't shed tears," said Mr. Gradgrind.—"Don't shed tears. I don't complain of you. You are an affectionate, earnest, good young woman, an—and we must make that do."

"Thank you, sir, very much," said Sissy, with a grateful curtsy.

"You are useful to Mrs. Gradgrind, and (in a generally pervading way) you are serviceable in the family also; so I understand from Miss Louisa, and, indeed, so I have observed myself. I therefore hope," said Mr. Gradgrind, "that you can make yourself happy in those relations."

"I should have nothing to wish, sir, if—"

"I understand you," said Mr. Gradgrind; "you still refer to your father. I have heard from Miss Louisa that you still preserve that bottle. Well! If your training in the science of arriving at exact results had been more successful, you would have been wiser on these points. I will say no more."

He really liked Sissy too well to have a contempt for her; otherwise he held her calculating powers in such very slight estimation, that he must have fallen upon that conclusion. Somehow or other, he had become possessed by an idea that there was some-

thing in this girl which could hardly be set forth in a tabular form. Her capacity of definition might be easily stated at a very low figure, her mathematical knowledge at nothing; yet he was not sure that if he had been required, for example, to tick her off into columns in a parliamentary return, he would have quite known how to divide her.

In some stages of his manufacture of the human fabric, the processes of Time are very rapid. Young Thomas and Sissy being both at such a stage of their working up, these changes were effected in a year or two; while Mr. Gradgrind himself seemed stationary in his course, and underwent no alteration.

Except one, which was apart from his necessary progress through the mill. Time hustled him into a little noisy and rather dirty machinery, in a bye corner, and made him Member of Parliament for Coketown: one of the respected members for ounce weights and measures, one of the representatives of the multiplication table, one of the deaf honorable gentlemen, dumb honorable gentlemen, blind honorable gentlemen, lame honorable gentlemen, dead honorable gentlemen, to every other consideration. Else wherefore live we in a Christian land, eighteen hundred and odd years after our Master?

All this while, Louisa had been passing on, so quiet and reserved, and so much given to watching the bright ashes at twilight as they fell into the grate and became extinct, that from the period when her father had said she was almost a young woman—which seemed but yesterday—she had scarcely attracted his notice again, when he found her quite a young woman.

"Quite a young woman," said Mr. Gradgrind, musing. "Dear me!"

Soon after this discovery, he became more thoughtful than usual for several days, and seemed much engrossed by one subject. On a certain night, when he was going out, and Louisa came to bid him good bye before his departure—as he was not to be home until late, and she would not see him again until the morning—he held her in his arms, looking at her in his kindest manner, and said:

"My dear Louisa, you are a woman."

She answered with the old, quick, searching look of the night when she was found at the Circus; then cast down her eyes. "Yes, father."

"My dear," said Mr. Gradgrind, "I must speak with you alone and seriously. Come to me in my room after breakfast to-morrow, will you?"

"Yes, father."

"Your hands are rather cold, Louisa. Are you not well?"

"Quite well, father."

"And cheerful?"

She looked at him again, and smiled in her peculiar manner. "I am as cheerful, father, as I usually am, or usually have been."

"That's well," said Mr. Gradgrind. So, he



kissed her and went away; and Louisa returned to the serene apartment of the hair-cutting character, and leaning her elbow on her hand, looked again at the short-lived sparks that so soon subsided into ashes.

"Are you there, Loo?" said her brother, looking in at the door. He was quite a young gentleman of pleasure now, and not quite a prepossessing one.

"Dear Tom," she answered, rising and embracing him, "how long it is since you have been to see me!"

"Why, I have been otherwise engaged, Loo, in the evenings; and in the daytime old Bounderby has been keeping me at it rather. But I touch him up with you, when he comes it too strong; and so we preserve an understanding. I say! Has father said anything particular to you, to-day or yesterday, Loo?"

"No, Tom. But he told me to-night that he wished to do so in the morning."

"Ah! That's what I mean," said Tom. "Do you know where he is to-night?"—with a very deep expression.

"No."

"Then I'll tell you. He's with old Bounderby. They are having a regular confab together, up at the Bank. Why at the Bank, do you think? Well, I'll tell you again. To keep Mrs. Sparsit's ears as far off as possible, I expect."

With her hand upon her brother's shoulder, Louisa still stood looking at the fire. Her brother glanced at her face with greater interest than usual, and encircling her waist with his arm, drew her coaxingly to him.

"You are very fond of me, an't you, Loo?"

"Indeed I am, Tom, though you do let such long intervals go by without coming to see me."

"Well, sister of mine," said Tom, "when you say that, you are near my thoughts. We might be so much oftener together—mightn't we? Always together, almost—mightn't we? It would do me a great deal of good if you were to make up your mind to I know what, Loo. It would be a splendid thing for me. It would be uncommonly jolly!"

Her thoughtfulness baffled his cunning scrutiny. He could make nothing of her face. He pressed her in his arm, and kissed her cheek. She returned the kiss, but still looked at the fire.

"I say, Loo! I thought I'd come and just hint to you what was going on: though I supposed you'd most likely guess, even if you didn't know. I can't stay, because I'm engaged to some fellows to-night. You won't forget how fond you are of me?"

"No, dear Tom, I won't forget."

"That's a capital girl," said Tom. "Good bye, Loo."

She gave him an affectionate good night, and went out with him to the door, whence the fires of Coketown could be seen, making the distance lurid. She stood there, looking steadfastly towards them, and listening to his

departing steps. They retreated quickly, as glad to get away from Stone Lodge; and she stood there yet, when he was gone and all was quiet. It seemed as if, first in her own fire within the house, and then in the fiery haze without, she tried to discover what kind of woof Old Time, that greatest and longest-established Spinner of all, would weave from the threads he had already spun into a woman. But, his factory is a secret place, his work is noiseless, and his Hands are mutes.

## CHAPTER XV.

Although Mr. Gradgrind did not take after Blue Beard, his room was quite a Blue chamber in its abundance of blue books. Whatever they could prove (which is usually anything you like), they proved there, in an army constantly strengthening by the arrival of new recruits. In that charmed apartment, the most complicated social questions were cast up, got into exact totals, and finally settled—if those concerned could only have been brought to know it. As if an astronomical observatory should be made without any windows, and the astronomer within should arrange the starry universe solely by pen, ink and paper, so Mr. Gradgrind, in *his* Observatory (and there are many like it), had no need to cast an eye upon the teeming myriads of human beings around him, but could settle all their destinies on a slate, and wipe out all their tears with one dirty little bit of sponge.

To this Observatory, then: a stern room with a deadly-statistical clock in it, which measured every second with a beat like a rap upon a coffin-lid: Louisa repaired on the appointed morning. The window looked towards Coketown; and when she sat down near her father's table, she saw the high chimneys and the long tracks of smoke looming in the heavy distance gloomily.

"My dear Louisa," said her father, "I prepared you last night to give me your serious attention in the conversation we are now going to have together. You have been so well trained, and you do, I am happy to say, so much justice to the education you have received, that I have perfect confidence in your good sense. You are not impulsive, you are not romantic, you are accustomed to view everything from the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation. From that ground alone, I know you will view and consider what I am going to communicate."

He waited, as if he would have been glad that she said something. But she said never a word.

"Louisa, my dear, you are the subject of a proposal of marriage that has been made to me."

Again he waited, and again she answered not one word. This so far surprised him, as to induce him gently to repeat, "a proposal of

marriage, my dear." To which, she returned without any visible emotion whatever:

"I hear you, father. I am attending, I assure you."

"Well!" said Mr. Gradgrind, breaking into a smile, after being for the moment at a loss. "you are even more dispassionate than I expected, Louisa. Or, perhaps you are not unprepared for the announcement I have it in charge to make?"

"I cannot say that, father, until I hear it. Prepared or unprepared, I wish to hear it all from you. I wish to hear you state it to me, father."

Strange to relate, Mr. Gradgrind was not so collected at this moment as his daughter was. He took a paper-knife in his hand, turned it over, laid it down, took it up again, and even then had to look along the blade of it, considering how to go on.

"What you say, my dear Louisa, is perfectly reasonable. I have undertaken then to let you you know that—that Mr. Bounderby has informed me that he has long watched your progress with particular interest and pleasure, and has long hoped that the time might ultimately arrive when he should offer you his hand in marriage. That time, to which she has so long, and certainly with great constancy, looked forward, is now come. Mr. Bounderby has made his proposal of marriage to me, and has entreated me to make it known to you, and to express his hope that you will take it into your favorable consideration."

Silence between them. The deadly-stationary clock very hollow. The distant smoke very black and heavy.

"Father," said Louisa, "do you think I love Mr. Bounderby?"

Mr. Gradgrind was extremely discomfited by this unexpected question. "Well, my child," he returned, "I—really—cannot take upon myself to say."

"Father," pursued Louisa, in exactly the same voice as before, "do you ask me to love Mr. Bounderby?"

"My dear Louisa, no. No. I ask nothing."

"Father," she still pursued, "does Mr. Bounderby ask me to love him?"

"Really, my dear," said Mr. Gradgrind, "it is difficult to answer your question—"

"Difficult to answer it, Yes or No, father?"

"Certainly, my dear. Because;" here was something to demonstrate, and it set him up again; "because the reply depends so materially, Louisa, on the sense in which we use the expression. Now, Mr. Bounderby does not do you the injustice, and does not do himself the injustice, of pretending to anything fanciful, fantastic, or (I am using synonymous terms) sentimental. Mr. Bounderby would have seen you grow up under his eyes, to very little purpose, if he could so far forget what is due to your good sense, not to say to his, as to address you from any such ground. Therefore, perhaps the expression

itself—I merely suggest this to you, my dear—may be a little misplaced."

"What would you advise me to use in its stead, father?"

"Why, my dear Louisa," said Mr. Gradgrind, completely recovered by this time, "I would advise you (since you ask me) to consider this question, as you have been accustomed to consider every other question, simply as one of tangible fact. The ignorant and the giddy may embarrass such subjects with irrelevant fancies, and other absurdities that have no existence, properly viewed—really no existence—but it is no compliment to you to say, that you know better. Now, what are the facts of this case? You are, we will say in round numbers, twenty years of age; Mr. Bounderby is, we will say in round numbers, fifty. There is some disparity in your respective years, but in your means and positions there is none; on the contrary, there is a great suitability. Then the question arises, Is this one disparity sufficient to operate as a bar to such a marriage? In considering this question, it is not unimportant to take into account the statistics of marriage, so far as they have yet been obtained, in England and Wales. I find, on reference to the figures, that a large proportion of these marriages are contracted between parties of very unequal ages, and that the elder of these contracting parties is, in rather more than three-fourths of these instances, the bridegroom. It is remarkable, as showing the wide prevalence of this law, that among the natives of the British possessions in India, also in a considerable part of China, and among the Calmucks of Tartary, the best means of computation yet furnished us by travellers, yield similar results. The disparity I have mentioned, therefore, almost ceases to be disparity, and (virtually) all but disappears."

"What do you recommend, father," asked Louisa, her reserved composure not in the least affected by these gratifying results, "that I should substitute for the term I used just now? For the misplaced expression?"

"Louisa," returned her father, "it appears to me that nothing can be plainer. Confining yourself rigidly to fact, the question of fact you state to yourself is: Does Mr. Bounderby ask me to marry him? Yes, he does. The sole remaining question then is: Shall I marry him? I think nothing can be plainer than that."

"Shall I marry him?" repeated Louisa, with great deliberation.

"Precisely. And it is satisfactory to me, as your father, my dear Louisa, to know that you do not come to the consideration of that question with the previous habits of mind, and habits of life, that belong to many young women."

"No, father," she returned, "I do not."

"I now leave you to judge for yourself," said Mr. Gradgrind. "I have stated the case, as such cases are usually stated among practical

minds; I have stated it, as the case of your mother and myself was stated in its time. The rest, my dear Louisa, is for you to decide."

From the beginning, she had sat looking at him fixedly. As he now leaned back in his chair, and bent his deep-set eyes upon her in his turn, perhaps he might have seen one wavering moment in her, when she was impelled to throw herself upon his breast, and give him the pent-up confidences of her heart. But, to see it, he must have overleaped at a bound the artificial barriers he had for many years been erecting, between himself and all those subtle essences of humanity which will elude the utmost cunning of algebra until the last trumpet ever to be sounded shall blow even algebra to wreck. The barriers were too many and too high for such a leap. He did *not* see it. With his unbending, utilitarian, matter-of-fact face, he hardened her again; and the moment shot away into the plumbless depth of the past, to mingle with all the lost opportunities that are drowned there.

Removing her eyes from him, she sat so long looking silently towards the town, that he said, at length: "Are you consulting the chimneys of the Coketown works, Louisa?"

"There seems to be nothing there, but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire bursts out, father!" she answered, turning quickly.

"Of course I know that, Louisa. I do not see the application of the remark." To do him justice he did not, at all.

She passed it away with a slight motion of her hand, and concentrating her attention upon him again, said, "Father, I have often thought that life is very short"—This was so distinctly one of his subjects that he interposed:

"It is short, no doubt, my dear. Still, the average duration of human life is proved to have increased of late years. The calculations of various life assurance and annuity offices, among other figures which cannot go wrong, have established the fact."

"I speak of my own life, father."

"O indeed? Still," said Mr. Gradgrind, "I need not point out to you, Louisa, that it is governed by the laws which govern lives in the aggregate."

"While it lasts, I would wish to do the little I can, and the little I am fit for. What does it matter!"

Mr. Gradgrind seemed rather at a loss to understand the last four words; replying, "How, matter? What, matter, my dear?"

"Mr. Bounderby," she went on in a steady, straight way, without regarding this, "asks me to marry him. The question I have to ask myself is, shall I marry him? That is so, father, is it not? You have told me so, father. Have you not?"

"Certainly, my dear."

"Let it be so. Since Mr. Bounderby likes to take me thus, I am satisfied to accept his proposal. Tell him, father, as soon as you

please, that this was my answer. Repeat it, word for word, if you can, because I should wish him to know what I said."

"It is quite right, my dear," retorted her father approvingly, "to be exact. I will observe your very proper request. Have you any wish, in reference to the period of your marriage, my child?"

"None, father. What does it matter!"

Mr. Gradgrind had drawn his chair a little nearer to her, and taken her hand. But, her repetition of these words seemed to strike with some little discord on his ear. He paused to look at her, and, still holding her hand, said:

"Louisa, I have not considered it essential to ask you one question, because the possibility implied in it appeared to me to be too remote. But, perhaps I ought to do so. You have never entertained in secret any other proposal?"

"Father," she returned, almost scornfully, "what other proposal can have been made to *me*? Whom have I seen? Where have I been? What are my heart's experiences?"

"My dear Louisa," returned Mr. Gradgrind, re-assured and satisfied, "you correct me justly. I merely wished to discharge my duty."

"What do I know, father," said Louisa in her quiet manner, "of tastes and fancies; of aspirations and affections; of all that part of my nature in which such light things might have been nourished? What escape have I had from problems that could be demonstrated, and realities that could be grasped?" As she said it, she unconsciously closed her hand, as if upon a solid object, and slowly opened it as though she were releasing dust or ash.

"My dear," assented her eminently practical parent, "quite true, quite true."

"Why, father," she pursued, "what a strange question to ask *me*! The baby-preference that even I have heard of as common among children, has never had its innocent resting-place in my breast. You have been so careful of me, that I never had a child's heart. You have trained me so well that I never dreamed a child's dream. You have dealt so wisely with me, father, from my cradle to this hour, that I never had a child's belief or a child's fear."

Mr. Gradgrind was quite moved by his success, and by this testimony to it. "My dear Louisa," said he, "you abundantly repay my care. Kiss me, my dear girl."

So, his daughter kissed him. Detaining her in his embrace, he said, "I may assure you now, my favorite child, that I am made happy by the sound decision at which you have arrived. Mr. Bounderby is a very remarkable man; and what little disparity can be said to exist between you—if any—is more than counterbalanced by the tone your mind has acquired. It has always been my object so to educate you, as that you might, while still in your early youth, be (if I may so express myself) almost any age. Kiss me once more, Louisa. Now, let us go and find your mother."



Accordingly, they went down to the drawing-room, where the esteemed lady with no nonsense about her was recumbent as usual, while Sissy worked beside her. She gave some feeble signs of returning animation when they entered, and presently the faint transparency was presented in a sitting attitude.

"Mrs. Gradgrind," said her husband, who had waited for the achievement of this feat with some impatience, "allow me to present to you Mrs. Bounderby."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Gradgrind, "so you have settled it! Well, I am sure I hope your health may be good, Louisa; for if your head begins to split as soon as you are married, which was the case with mine, I cannot consider that you are to be envied, though I have no doubt you think you are, as all girls do. However, I give you joy, my dear—and hope you may now turn all your ological studies to good account, I am sure I do! I must give you a kiss of congratulation, Louisa; but don't touch my right shoulder, for there's something running down it all day long. And now you see," whimpered Mrs. Gradgrind, adjusting her shawls after the affectionate ceremony, "I shall be worrying myself, morning, noon, and night, to know what I am to call him!"

"Mrs. Gradgrind," said her husband, solemnly, "what do you mean?"

"Whatever I am to call him, Mr. Gradgrind, when he is married to Louisa! I must call him something. It's impossible," said Mrs. Gradgrind, with a mingled sense of politeness and injury, "to be constantly addressing him, and never giving him a name. I cannot call him Josiah, for the name is insupportable to me. You yourself wouldn't hear of Joe, you very well know. Am I to call my own son-in-law, Mister? Not, I believe, unless the time has arrived when, as an invalid, I am to be trampled upon by my relations. Then, what am I to call him?"

Nobody present having any suggestion to offer in the remarkable emergency, Mrs. Gradgrind departed this life for the time being, after delivering the following codicil to her remarks already executed:

"As to the wedding, all I ask, Louisa, is,—and I ask it with a fluttering in my chest, which actually extends to the soles of my feet,—that it may take place soon. Otherwise, I know it is one of those subjects I shall never hear the last of."

When Mr. Gradgrind had presented Mrs. Bounderby, Sissy had suddenly turned her head, and looked, in wonder, in pity, in sorrow in doubt, in a multitude of emotions, towards Louisa. Louisa had known it, and seen it, without looking at her. From that moment she was impassive, proud, and cold—held Sissy at a distance—changed to her altogether.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Bounderby's first disquietude, on hearing of his happiness, was occasioned by the

necessity of imparting it to Mrs. Sparsit. He could not make up his mind how to do that, or what the consequences of the step might be. Whether she would instantly depart, bag and baggage, to Lady Scadgers, or would positively refuse to budge from the premises; whether she would be plaintive or abusive, tearful or tearing; whether she would break her heart, or break the looking-glass; Mr. Bounderby could not at all foresee. However, as it must be done, he had no choice but to do it; so, after attempting several letters, and failing in them all, he resolved to do it by word of mouth.

On his way home, on the evening he set aside for this momentous purpose, he took the precaution of stepping into a chemist's shop and buying a bottle of the very strongest smelling-salts. "By George!" said Mr. Bounderby, "if she takes it in the fainting way, I'll have the skin off her nose, at all events!" But, in spite of being thus forearmed, he entered his own house with anything but a courageous air; and appeared, before the object of his misgivings, like a dog who was conscious of coming direct from the pantry.

"Good evening, Mr. Bounderby!"

"Good evening, ma'am, good evening." He drew up his chair, and Mrs. Sparsit drew back hers, as who should say, "Your fireside, sir. I freely admit it. It is for you to occupy it all, if you think proper."

"Don't go to the North Pole, ma'am!" said Mr. Bounderby.

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, and returned, though short of her former position.

Mr. Bounderby sat looking at her, as, with the points of a stiff sharp pair of scissors, she picked out holes for some inscrutable ornamental purpose, in a piece of cambric. An operation which, taken in connexion with the bushy eyebrows and the Roman nose, suggested with some liveliness the idea of a hawk engaged upon the eyes of a tough little bird. She was so steadfastly occupied, that many minutes elapsed before she looked up from her work; when she did so, Mr. Bounderby bespoke her attention with a hitch of his head.

"Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am," said Mr. Bounderby, putting his hands in his pockets, and assuring himself with his right hand that the cork of the little bottle was ready for use, "I have no occasion to say to you, that you are not only a lady born and bred, but a devilish sensible woman."

"Sir," returned the lady, "this is indeed not the first time that you have honored me with similar expressions of your good opinion."

"Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am," said Mr. Bounderby, "I am going to astonish you."

"Yes, sir?" returned Mrs. Sparsit, interrogatively, and in the most tranquil manner possible. She generally wore mittens, and she now laid down her work and smoothed those mittens.

"I am going, ma'am," said Mr. Bounderby, "to marry Tom Gradgrind's daughter."

"Yes, sir?" returned Mrs. Sparsit. "I hope you may be happy, Mr. Bounderby. Oh, indeed I hope you may be happy, sir!" And she said it with such great condescension, as well as with such great compassion for him, that Bounderby, far more disconcerted than if she had thrown her work-box at the mirror, or swooned on the hearth-rug,—corked up the smelling-salts tight in his pocket, and thought, "Now con-found this woman, who could have ever guessed that she would take it in this way!"

"I wish with all my heart, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, in a highly superior manner; somehow she seemed, in a moment, to have established a right to pity him ever afterwards; "that you may be in all respects very happy."

"Well, ma'am," returned Bounderby, with some resentment in his tone: which was clearly lowered, though in spite of himself, "I am obliged to you. I hope I shall be."

"Do you, sir?" said Mrs. Sparsit, with great affability. "But naturally you do; of course you do."

A very awkward pause on Mr. Bounderby's part succeeded. Mrs. Sparsit sedately resumed her work, and occasionally gave a small cough, which sounded like the cough of conscious strength and forbearance.

"Well, ma'am," resumed Bounderby, "under these circumstances, I imagine it would not be agreeable to a character like yours to remain here, though you would be very welcome here?"

"Oh dear no, sir, I could on no account think of that!" Mrs. Sparsit shook her head, still in her highly superior manner, and a little changed the small cough—coughing now, as if the spirit of prophecy rose within her, but had better be coughed down.

"However, ma'am," said Bounderby, "there are apartments at the Bank, where a born and bred lady, as keeper of the place, would be rather a catch than otherwise; and if the same terms—"

"I beg your pardon, sir. You were so good as to promise that you would always substitute the phrase, annual compliment."

"Well, ma'am, annual compliment. If the same annual compliment would be acceptable there, why, I see nothing to part us unless you do."

"Sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit. "The proposal is like yourself, and if the position I should assume at the Bank is one that I could occupy without descending lower in the social scale—"

"Why, of course it is," said Bounderby. "If it was not, ma'am, you don't suppose that I should offer it to a lady who has moved in the society you have moved in. Not that I care for such society, you know! But *you* do."

"Mr. Bounderby, you are very considerate."

"You'll have your own private apartments, and you'll have your coals and your candles, and all the rest of it, and you'll have your maid to attend upon you, and you'll have your light porter to protect you, and you'll be what I take

the liberty of *considering* precious comfortable," said Bounderby.

"Sir," rejoined Mrs. Sparsit, "say no more. In yielding up my trust here, I shall not be freed from the necessity of eating the bread of dependence:" she might have said the sweet-bread, for that delicate article in a savory brown sauce was her favorite supper: "and I would rather receive it from your hand, than from any other. Therefore, sir, I accept your offer gratefully, and with many sincere acknowledgments for past favors. And I hope, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, concluding in an impressively compassionate manner, "I fondly hope that Miss Gradgrind may be all you desire, and deserve!"

Nothing moved Mrs. Sparsit from that position any more. It was in vain for Bounderby to bluster, or to assert himself in any of his explosive ways; Mrs. Sparsit was resolved to have compassion on him, as a Victim. She was polite, obliging, cheerful, hopeful; but, the more polite, the more obliging, the more cheerful, the more hopeful, the more exemplary altogether, she; the forlorn Sacrifice and Victim, he. She had that tenderness for his melancholy fate, that his great red countenance used to break out into cold perspirations when she looked at him.

Meanwhile the marriage was appointed to be solemnized in eight weeks' time, and Mr. Bounderby went every evening to Stone Lodge as an accepted wooer. Love was made on these occasions in the form of bracelets; and, on all occasions during the period of betrothal, took a manufacturing aspect. Dresses were made, jewellery was made, cakes and gloves were made, settlements were made, and an extensive assortment of Facts did appropriate honor to the contract. The business was all Fact, from first to last. The Hours did not go through any of those rosy performances, which foolish poets have ascribed to them at such times; neither did the clocks go any faster, or any slower, than at other seasons. The deadly-statistical recorder in the Gradgrind observatory knocked every second on the head as it was born, and buried it with his accustomed regularity.

So the day came, as all other days come to people who will only stick to reason; and when it came, there were married in the church of the florid wooden legs—that popular order of architecture—Josiah Bounderby, Esquire, of Coketown, to Louisa, eldest daughter of Thomas Gradgrind, Esquire, of Stone Lodge, M. P. for that borough. And when they were united in holy matrimony, they went home to breakfast at Stone Lodge aforesaid.

There was an improving party assembled on the auspicious occasion, who knew what everything they had to eat and drink was made of, and how it was imported or exported, and in what quantities, and in what bottoms, whether native or foreign, and all about it. The bridesmaids, down to little Jane Gradgrind, were, in an intellectual

point of view, fit helpmates for the calculating boy; and there was no nonsense about any of the company.

After breakfast, the bridegroom addressed them in the following terms:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. Since you have done my wife and myself the honor of drinking our healths and happiness, I suppose I must acknowledge the same; though, as you all know me, and know what I am, and what my extraction was, you won't expect a speech from a man who, when he sees a Post, says 'that's a Post,' and when he sees a Pump, says 'that's a Pump,' and is not to be got to call a Post a Pump, or a Pump a Post, or either of them a Toothpick. If you want a speech this morning, my friend and father-in-law, Tom Gradgrind, is a member of Parliament, and you know where to get it. I am not your man. However, if I feel a little independent when I look around this table to day, and reflect how little I thought of marrying Tom Gradgrind's daughter when I was a ragged street-boy, who never washed his face unless it was at a pump, and that not oftener than once a fortnight, I hope I may be excused. So, I hope you like my feeling independent; if you don't, I can't help it. I *do* feel independent. Now, I have mentioned, and you have mentioned, that I am this day married to Tom Gradgrind's daughter. I am very glad to be so. It has long been my wish to be so. I have watched her bringing up, and I believe she is worthy of me. At the same time—not to deceive you—I believe I am worthy of her. So, I thank you, on both our parts, for the goodwill you have shown towards us; and the best wish I can give the unmarried part of the present company, is this: I hope every lachelor may find as good a wife as I have found. And I hope every spinster may find as good a husband as my wife has found."

Shortly after which oration, as they were going on a nuptial trip to Lyons, in order that Mr. Bounderby might take the opportunity of seeing how the Hands got on in those parts, and whether they, too, required to be fed with gold spoons; the happy pair departed for the railroad. The bride, in passing down stairs, dressed for her journey, found Tom waiting for her—flushed, either with his feelings or the vinous part of the breakfast.

"What a game girl you are, to be such a first-rate sister, Loo!" whispered Tom.

She clung to him, as she should have clung to some far better nature that day, and was a little shaken in her reserved composure for the first time.

"Old Bounderby's quite ready," said Tom. "Time's up. Good bye! I shall be on the look-out for you when you come back. I say, my dear Loo! An't it uncommonly jolly now?"

## CHAPTER XVII.

A SUNNY midsummer day. There was such a thing sometimes, even in Coketown.

Seen from a distance in such weather, Coketown lay shrouded in a haze of its own, which appeared impervious to the sun's rays. You only knew the town was there, because you knew there could have been no such sulky blotch upon the prospect without a town. A blur of soot and smoke, now confusedly tending this way, now that way, now aspiring to the vault of heaven, now murkily creeping along the earth, as the wind rose and fell, or changed its quarter: a dense formless jumble, with sheets of cross light in it, that showed nothing but masses of darkness: Coketown in the distance was suggestive of itself, though not a brick of it could be seen.

The wonder was, it was there at all. It had been ruined so often, that it was amazing how it had borne so many shocks. Surely there never was such fragile china-ware as that of which the millers of Coketown were made. Handle them never so lightly, and they fell to pieces with such ease that you might suspect them of having been flawed before. They were ruined, when they were required to send laboring children to school; they were ruined, when inspectors were appointed to look into their works; they were ruined, when such inspectors considered it doubtful whether they were quite justified in chopping people up with their machinery; they were utterly undone, when it was hinted that perhaps they need not always make quite so much smoke. Besides Mr. Bounderby's gold spoon which was generally received in Coketown, another prevalent fiction was very popular there. It took the form of a threat. Whenever a Coketowner felt he was ill-used—that is to say, whenever he was not left entirely alone, and it was proposed to hold him accountable for the consequences of any of his acts—he was sure to come out with the awful menace, that he would "sooner pitch his property into the Atlantic." This had terrified the Home Secretary within an inch of his life, on several occasions.

However, the Coketowners were so patriotic after all, that they never had pitched their property into the Atlantic yet, but on the contrary, had been kind enough to take mighty good care of it. So there it was, in a haze yonder; and it increased and multiplied.

The streets were hot and dusty on the summer day, and the sun was so bright that it even shone through the heavy vapor drooping over Coketown, and could not be looked at steadily. Stokers emerged from low underground doorways into factory yards, and sat on steps, and posts, and palings, wiping their swarthy visages, and contemplating coals. The whole town seemed to be frying in oil. There was a stiling smell of hot oil everywhere. The steam-engines shone with it, the dresses of the Hands were soiled with it, the mills throughout their many stories oozed and trickled it. The atmosphere of those Fairy palaces was like the breath of the simoom; and their inhabitants, wasting with



heat, toiled languidly in the desert. But no temperature made the melancholy mad elephants more mad or more sane. Their wearisome heads went up and down at the same rate, in hot weather and cold, wet weather and dry, fair weather and foul. The measured motion of their shadows on the walls, was the substitute Coketown had to show for the shadows of rustling woods; while for the summer hum of insects, it could offer, all the year round, from the dawn of Monday to the night of Saturday, the whirr of shafts and wheels.

Drowsily, they whirled all through this sunny day, making the passenger more sleepy and more hot as he passed the humming walls of the mills. Sunblinds, and sprinklings of water, a little cooled the main streets and the shops; but the mills, and the courts and alleys, baked at a fierce heat. Down upon the river that was black and thick with dye, some Coketown boys who were at large—a rare sight there—rowed a crazy boat, which made a spumous track upon the water as it jogged along, while every dip of an oar stirred up vile smells. But the sun itself, however beneficent generally, was less kind to Coketown than hard frost and rarely looked intently into any of its closer regions without engendering more death than life. So does the eye of Heaven itself become an evil eye, when incapable or sordid hands are interposed between it and the things it looks upon to bless.

Mrs. Sparsit sat in her afternoon apartment at the Bank, on the shadier side of the frying street. Office-hours were over; and at that period of the day, in warm weather, she usually embellished with her genteel presence, a managerial board-room over the public office. Her own private sitting-room was a story higher, at the window of which post of observation she was ready, every morning, to greet Mr. Bounderby as he came across the road, with the sympathising recognition appropriate to a Victim. He had been married now, a year; and Mrs. Sparsit had never released him from her determined pity a moment.

The Bank offered no violence to the wholesome monotony of the town. It was another red brick house, with black outside shutters, green inside blinds, a black street door up two white steps, a brazen door-plate and a brazen door handle full stop. It was a size larger than Mr. Bounderby's house, as other houses were from a size to half-a-dozen sizes smaller; in all other particulars, it was strictly according to pattern.

Mrs. Sparsit was conscious that by coming in the evening-tide among the desks and writing implements, she shed a feminine, not to say also aristocratic, grace upon the office. Seated, with her needlework or netting apparatus, at the window, she had a self-laudatory sense of correcting, by her lady-like deportment, the rude business aspect of the place. With this impression of her interesting char-

acter upon her, Mrs. Sparsit considered herself, in some sort, the Bank Fairy. The townspeople who, in their passing and re-passing, saw her there, regarded her as the Bank Dragon, keeping watch over the treasures of the mine.

What those treasures were, Mrs. Sparsit knew as little as they did. Gold and silver coin, precious paper, secrets that if divulged would bring vague destruction upon vague persons (generally, however, people whom she disliked), were the chief items in her ideal catalogue thereof. For the rest, she knew that after office hours, she reigned supreme over all the office furniture, and over a locked up iron room with three locks, against the door of which strong chamber the light porter laid his head every night, on a truckle bed that disappeared at cockcrow. Further, she was lady paramount over certain vaults in the basements, sharply spiked off from communication with the predatory world; and over the relics of the current day's work, consisting of blots of ink, worn out pens, fragments of wafers, and scraps of paper torn so small, that nothing interesting could ever be deciphered on them when Mrs. Sparsit tried. Lastly, she was guardian over a little armory of cutlasses and carbines, arrayed in vengeful order above one of the official chimney-pieces; and over that respectable tradition never to be separated from a place of business claiming to be wealthy—a row of fire-buckets—vessels calculated to be of no physical utility on any occasion, but observed to exercise a fine moral influence, almost equal to bullion, on most beholders.

A deaf serving-woman and the light porter completed Mrs. Sparsit's empire. The deaf serving-woman was rumored to be wealthy; and a saying had for many years gone about among the lower orders of Coketown, that she would be murdered some night when the Bank was shut, for the sake of her money. It was generally considered, indeed, that she had been due some time, and ought to have fallen long ago; but she had kept her life, and her situation, with an ill-conditioned tenacity that occasioned much offence and disappointment.

Mrs. Sparsit's tea was just set for her on a pert little table, with its tripod of legs in an attitude, which she insinuated after office hours, into the company of the stern, earthen topped, long board-table that bestrode the middle of the room. The light porter placed the tea-tray on it, knocking his forehead as a form of homage.

"Thank you, Bitzer," said Mrs. Sparsit.

"Thank *you*, ma'am," returned the light porter. He was a very light porter indeed; as light as in the days when he blinkingly defined a horse, for girl number twenty.

"All is shut up, Bitzer?" said Mrs. Sparsit.

"All is shut up, ma'am."

"And what," said Mrs. Sparsit, pouring out her tea, "is the news of the day? Anything?"

"Well, ma'am, I can't say that I have heard anything particular. Our people are a bad lot, ma'am; but that is no news, unfortunately."

"What are the restless wretches doing now?" asked Mrs. Sparsit.

"Merely going on in the old way, ma'am. Uniting, and leaguings, and engaging to stand by one another."

"It is much to be regretted," said Mrs. Sparsit, making her nose more Roman and her eyebrows more Coriolanian in the strength of her severity, "that the united masters allow of any such class combinations."

"Yes, ma'am," said Bitzer.

"Being united themselves, they ought one and all to set their faces against employing any man who is united with any other man," said Mrs. Sparsit.

"They have done that, ma'am," returned Bitzer; "but—it rather fell through, ma'am."

"I do not pretend to understand these things," said Mrs. Sparsit, with dignity, "my lot having been originally cast in a widely different sphere; and Mr. Sparsit, as a Fowler, being also quite out of the pale of any such dissensions. I only know that these people must be conquered, and that it's high time it was done, once for all."

"Yes, ma'am," returned Bitzer, with a demonstration of great respect for Mrs. Sparsit's oracular authority. "You couldn't put it clearer, I am sure, ma'am."

As this was his usual hour for having a little confidential chat with Mrs. Sparsit, and as he had already caught her eye and seen that she was going to ask him something, he made a pretence of arranging the rulers, inkstands, and so forth, while that lady went on with her tea, glancing through the open window down into the street.

"Has it been a busy day, Bitzer?" asked Mrs. Sparsit.

"Not a very busy day, my lady. About an average day." He now and then slid into my lady, instead of ma'am, as an involuntary acknowledgment of Mrs. Sparsit's personal dignity and claims to reverence.

"The clerks," said Mrs. Sparsit, carefully brushing an imperceptible crumb of bread and butter from her left-hand mitten, "are trustworthy, punctual, and industrious, of course?"

"Yes, ma'am, pretty fair ma'am. With the usual exception."

He held the respectable office of general spy and informer in the establishment, for which volunteer service he received a present at Christmas, over and above his weekly wage. He had grown into an extremely clear-headed, cautious, prudent young man, who was safe to rise in the world. His mind was so exactly regulated, that he had no affections or passions. All his proceedings were the result of the nicest and coldest calculation; and it was not without cause that Mrs. Sparsit habitually observed of him, that he was a young man of the steadiest principle she had

ever known. Having satisfied himself, on his father's death, that his mother had a right of settlement in Coketown, this excellent young economist had asserted that right for her with such a steadfast adherence to the principle of the case, that she had been shut up in the workhouse ever since. It must be admitted that he allowed her half a pound of tea a year, which was weak in him; first, because all gifts have an inevitable tendency to pauperize the recipient, and secondly, because his only reasonable transaction in that commodity would have been to buy it for as little as he could possibly give, and sell it for as much as he could possibly get; it having been clearly ascertained by philosophers that in this is comprised the whole duty of man—not a part of man's duty, but the whole.

"Pretty fair, ma'am. With the usual exception, ma'am," repeated Bitzer.

"Ah—h!" said Mrs. Sparsit, shaking her head over her tea-cup, and taking a long gulp.

"Mr. Thomas, ma'am, I doubt Mr. Thomas very much, ma'am, I don't like his ways at all."

"Bitzer," said Mrs. Sparsit, in a very impressive manner, "do you recollect my having said anything to you respecting names?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. It's quite true that you did object to names being used, and they're always best avoided."

"Please to remember that I have a charge here," said Mrs. Sparsit, with her air of state. "I hold a trust here, Bitzer, under Mr. Bounderby. However improbable both Mr. Bounderby and myself might have deemed it years ago, that he would ever become my patron, making me an annual compliment, I cannot but regard him in that light. From Mr. Bounderby I have received every acknowledgment of my social station, and every recognition of my family descent, that I could possibly expect. More, far more. Therefore, to my patron I will be scrupulously true. And I do not consider, I will not consider, I cannot consider," said Mrs. Sparsit, with a most extensive stock on hand of honor and morality, "that I *should* be scrupulously true, if I allowed names to be mentioned under this roof, that are unfortunately—most unfortunately—no doubt of that—connected with his."

Bitzer knuckled his forehead again, and again begged pardon.

"No, Bitzer," continued Mrs. Sparsit, "say an individual, and I will hear you; say Mr. Thomas, and you must excuse me."

"With the usual exception, ma'am," said Bitzer, trying back, "of an individual."

"Ah—h!" Mrs. Sparsit repeated the ejaculation, the shake of the head over her tea-cup, and the long gulp, as taking up the conversation again at the point where it had been interrupted.

"An individual, ma'am," said Bitzer, "has never been what he ought to have been, since he first came into the place. He is a dissipa-

ted, extravagant idler. He is not worth his salt, ma'am. He wouldn't get it either, if he hadn't a friend and relation at court, ma'am!"

"Ah—h!" said Mrs. Sparsit, with another melancholy shake of her head.

"I only hope, ma'am," pursued Bitzer, "that his friend and relation may not supply him with the means of carrying on. Otherwise, ma'am, we know out of whose pocket *that* money comes."

"Ah—h!" sighed Mrs. Sparsit again, with another melancholy shake of her head.

"He is to be pitied, ma'am. The last party I have alluded to, is to be pitied, ma'am," said Bitzer.

"Yes, Bitzer," said Mrs. Sparsit. "I have always pitied the delusion, always."

"As to an individual, ma'am," said Bitzer, dropping his voice and drawing nearer, "he is as improvident as any of the people in this town. And you know what *their* improvidence is, ma'am. No one could wish to know it better than a lady of your eminence does."

"They would do well," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "to take example by you, Bitzer."

"Thank you, ma'am. But, since you do refer to me, now look at me, ma'am. I have put by a little, ma'am, already. That gratuity which I receive at Christmas, ma'am: I never touch it. I don't even go the length of my wages, though they're not high, ma'am. Why can't they do as I have done, ma'am? What one person can do, another can do."

This, again, was among the fictions of Coketown. Any capitalist there, who had made sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, always professed to wonder why the sixty thousand nearest Hands didn't each make sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, and more or less reproached them every one for not accomplishing the little feat. What I did, you can do. Why don't you go and do it?

"As to their wanting recreations, ma'am," said Bitzer, "it's stuff and nonsense. I don't want recreations. I never did, and I never shall; I don't like 'em. As to their combining together; there are many of them, I have no doubt, that by watching and informing upon one another could earn a trifle now and then, whether in money or good will, and improve their livelihood. Then, why don't they improve it, ma'am? It's the first consideration of a rational creature, and it's what they pretend to want."

"Pretend indeed!" said Mrs. Sparsit.

"I am sure we are constantly hearing, ma'am, till it becomes quite nauseous, concerning their wives and families," said Bitzer. "Why look at *me*, ma'am! I don't want a wife and family. Why should they?"

"Because they are improvident," said Mrs. Sparsit.

"Yes, ma'am," returned Bitzer, "that's where it is. If they were more provident, and less perverse, ma'am, what would they do? They would say, 'While my hat covers my

family,' or, 'while my bonnet covers my family'—as the case might be, ma'am—'I have only one to feed, and that's the person I most like to feed.'"

"To be sure," assented Mrs. Sparsit, eating muffin.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bitzer, knocking his for head again, in return for the favour of Mrs. Sparsit's improving conversation. "Would you wish a little more hot water, ma'am, or is there anything else that I could fetch you?"

"Nothing just now, Bitzer."

"Thank you, ma'am. I shouldn't wish to disturb you at your meals, ma'am, particularly tea, knowing your partiality for it," said Bitzer, eating a little to look over into the street from where he stood; "but there's a gentleman been looking up here for a minute or so, ma'am, and he has come across as if he was going to knock. That is his knock, ma'am, no doubt."

He stepped to the window; and looking out, and drawing in his head again, confirmed himself with, "Yes, ma'am. Would you wish the gentleman to be shown in, ma'am?"

"I don't know who it can be," said Mrs. Sparsit, wiping her mouth and arranging her mittens.

"A stranger, ma'am, evidently."

"What a stranger can want at the Bank at this time of the evening, unless he comes upon some business for which he is too late, I don't know," said Mrs. Sparsit; "but I hold a charge in this establishment from Mr. Bounderby, and I will never shrink from it. If to see him is any part of the duty I have accepted, I will see him. Use your own discretion, Bitzer."

Here the visitor, all unconscious of Mrs. Sparsit's magnanimous words, repeated his knock so loudly that the light porter hastened down to open the door; while Mrs. Sparsit took the precaution of concealing her little table, with all its appliances upon it, in a cupboard, and then decamped up stairs that she might appear, if needful, with greater dignity.

"If you please, ma'am, the gentleman would wish to see you," said Bitzer, with his light eye at Mrs. Sparsit's keyhole. So, Mrs. Sparsit, who had improved the interval by touching up her cap, took her classical features down stairs again, and entered the board room in the manner of a Roman matron going outside the city walls to treat with an invading general.

The visitor having strolled to the window, and being then engaged in looking carelessly out, was as unmoved by this impressive entry as man could possibly be. He stood whistling to himself with all imaginable coolness, with his hat still on, and a certain air of exhaustion upon him, in part arising from excessive summer and in part from excessive gentility. For, it was to be seen with half an eye that he was a thorough gentleman, made to the model of the time; weary of everything, and putting no more faith in anything than Lucifer.



"I believe, sir," quoth Mrs. Sparsit, "you wished to see me."

"I beg your pardon," he said, turning and removing his hat; "pray excuse me."

"Humph!" thought Mrs. Sparsit, as she made a stately bend. "Five and thirty, good looking, good figure, good teeth, good voice, good breeding, well dressed, dark hair, bold eyes." All which Mrs. Sparsit observed in her womanly way—like the Sultan who put his head in the pail of water—merely in dipping down and coming up again.

"Please to be seated, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit.

"Thank you. Allow me." He placed a chair for her, but remained himself carelessly lounging against the table. "I'll fit my servant at the railway looking after the luggage—very heavy train and vast quantity of it in the van—and strolled on, looking about me. Exceedingly odd place. Will you allow me to ask you if it's *always* as black as this?"

"In general much blacker," returned Mrs. Sparsit, in her uncompromising way.

"Is it possible! Excuse me: you are not a native, I think?"

"No, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit. It was once my good or ill fortune, as it may be—before I became a widow—to move in a very different sphere. My husband was a Powler."

"Beg your pardon, really!" said the stranger. "Was—?"

Mrs. Sparsit repeated, "A Powler." "Powler Family," said the stranger, after reflecting a few moments. Mrs. Sparsit signified assent. The stranger seemed a little more fatigued than before.

"You must be very much bored here?" was the inference he drew from the communication.

"I am the servant of circumstances, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, "and I have long adapted myself to the governing power of my life."

"Very philosophical," returned the stranger, "and very exemplary and laudable, and—" It seemed to be scarcely worth his while to finish the sentence, so he played with his watch-chain wearily.

"May I be permitted to ask, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, to what I am indebted for the favour of—"

"Assuredly," said the stranger. "Much obliged to you for reminding me. I am the bearer of a letter of introduction to Mr. Bounderby the Banker. Walking through this extraordinarily black town, while they were getting dinner ready at the hotel, I asked a fellow whom I met; one of the working people; who appeared to have been taking a shower-bath of something fluffy, which I assume to be the raw material;—"

Mrs. Sparsit inclined her head.

"—Raw material—where Mr. Bounderby the Banker, might reside. Upon which, mislaid no doubt by the word Banker, he directed me to the Bank. Fact being, I presume, that Mr. Bounderby the Banker, does *not* reside in

the edifice in which I have the honour of offering this explanation?"

"No, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "he does not."

"Thank you. I had no intention of delivering my letter at the present moment, nor have I. But, strolling on to the Bank to kill time, and having the good fortune to observe at the window," towards which he languidly waved his hand, then slightly bowed, "a lady of a very superior and agreeable appearance, I considered that I could not do better than take the liberty of asking that lady where Mr. Bounderby the Banker, *does* live. Which I accordingly venture, with all suitable apologies, to do."

The inattention and indolence of his manner were sufficiently relieved, to Mrs. Sparsit's thinking, by a certain gallantry at ease, which offered her homage too. Here he was, for instance, at this moment, all but sitting on the table, and yet lazily bending over her, as if he acknowledged an attraction in her that made her charming—in her way.

"Banks, I know, are always suspicious, and officially must be," said the stranger, whose lightness and smoothness of speech were pleasant likewise; suggesting matter far more sensible and humorous than it ever contained—which was perhaps a shrewd device of the founder of this numerous sect, whosoever may have been that great man; "therefore I may observe that my letter—here it is—is from the member for this place—Gradgrind—whom I have had the pleasure of knowing in London."

Mrs. Sparsit recognised the hand, intimated that such confirmation was quite unnecessary, and gave Mr. Bounderby's address, with all needful clues and directions in aid.

"Thousand thanks," said the stranger. "Of course you know the Banker well?"

"Yes, sir," rejoined Mrs. Sparsit. "In my dependent relation towards him, I have known him ten years."

"Quite an eternity! I think he married Gradgrind's daughter?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Sparsit, suddenly compressing her mouth. "He had that—honor."

"The lady is quite a philosopher, I am told?"

"Indeed, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit. *Is she?*"

"Excuse my impertinent curiosity," pursued the stranger, fluttering over Mrs. Sparsit's eyebrows, with a propitiatory air, "but you know the family, and know the world. I am about to know the family, and may have much to do with them. Is the lady so very alarming? Her father gives her such a portentously hard-headed reputation, that I have a burning desire to know. Is she absolutely unapproachable? Repellently and stunningly clever? I see, by your meaning smile, you think not. You have poured balm into my anxious soul. As to age, now. Forty? Five and thirty?"

Mrs. Sparsit laughed outright. "A chit," said she. "Not twenty when she was married."

"I give you my honor, Mrs. Powler," return-

ed the stranger, detaching himself from the table, "that I never was so astonished in my life!"

It really did seem to impress him, to the utmost extent of his capacity of being impressed. He looked at his informant for full a quarter of a minute, and appeared to have the surprise in his mind all the time. "I assure you, Mrs. Fowler," he then said, much exhausted, "that the father's manner prepared me for a grim and stony maturity. I am obliged to you, of all things, for correcting so absurd a mistake. Pray excuse my intrusion. Many thanks. Good day!"

He bowed himself out; and Mrs. Sparsit, hiding in the window-curtain, saw him languishing down the street on the shady side of the way, observed of all the town.

"What do you think of the gentleman, Bitzer?" she asked the light porter, when he came to take away.

"Spends a deal of money on his dress, ma'am."

"It must be admitted," said Mrs. Sparsit, "that it's very tasteful."

"Yes, ma'am," returned Bitzer, "if that's worth the money."

"Besides which, ma'am," resumed Bitzer, while he was polishing the table, "he looks to me as if he gamed."

"It's immoral to game," said Mrs. Sparsit.

"It's ridiculous, ma'am," said Bitzer, "because the chances are against the players."

Whether it was that the heat prevented Mrs. Sparsit from working, or whether it was that her hand was out, she did no work that night. She sat at the window, when the sun began to sink behind the smoke; she sat there, when the smoke was burning red, when the color faded from it, when darkness seemed to rise slowly out of the ground, and creep upward, upward, up to the house-tops, up the church steeple, up to the summits of the factory chimneys, up to the sky. Without a candle in the room, Mrs. Sparsit sat at the window, with her hands before her, not thinking much of the sounds of evening; the whooping of boys, the barking of dogs, the rumbling of wheels, the steps and voices of passengers, the shrill street cries, the clogs upon the pavement when it was their hour for going by, the shutting-up of shop-shutters. Not until the light porter announced that her nocturnal sweetbread was ready, did Mrs. Sparsit arouse herself from her reverie, and convey her dense black eyebrows—by that time creased with meditation, as if they needed ironing out—up stairs.

"O, you Fool!" said Mrs. Sparsit, when she was alone at her supper. Whom she meant, she did not say; but she could scarcely have meant the sweetbread.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

The Gradgrind party wanted assistance in murdering the Graces. They went about recruiting; and where could they enlist recruits

more readily, than among the fine gentlemen who, having found out everything to be worth nothing, were equally ready for anything?

Moreover, the healthy spirits who had mounted to this sublime height were attractive to many of the Gradgrind school. They liked fine gentlemen; they pretended that they did not, but they did. They became exhausted in imitation of them; and they yaw-yawed in their speech like them; and they served out, with an enervated air, the little mouldy rations of political economy, on which they regaled their disciples. There never before was seen on earth such a wonderful hybrid race as was thus produced.

Among the fine gentlemen not regularly belonging to the Gradgrind school, there was one of a good family and a better appearance, with a happy turn of humor which had told immensely with the House of Commons on the occasion of his entertaining it with his (and the Board of Directors') view of a railway accident, in which the most careful officers ever known, employed by the most liberal managers ever heard of, assisted by the finest mechanical contrivances ever devised, the whole in action on the best line ever constructed, had killed five people and wounded thirty-two, by a casualty without which the excellence of the whole system would have been positively incomplete. Among the slain was a cow, and among the scattered articles unowned, a widow's cap. And the honorable member had so tickled the House (which has a delicate sense of humor) by putting the cap on the cow, that it became impatient of any serious reference to the Coroner's Inquest, and brought the railway off with Cheers and Laughter.

Now, this gentleman had a younger brother of still better appearance than himself, who had tried life as a Cornet of Dragoons, and found it a bore; and had afterwards tried it in the train of an English minister abroad, and found it a bore; and had then strolled to Jerusalem, and got bored there; and had then gone yachting about the world, and got bored everywhere. To whom this honorable and jocular member fraternally said one day, "Jem, there's a good opening among the hard Fact fellows, and they want men. I wonder you don't go in for statistics." Jem, rather taken by the novelty of the idea, and very hard up for a change, was as ready to "go in" for statistics as for anything else. So, he went in. He coached himself up with a blue book or two; and his brother put it about among the hard Fact fellows, and said, "If you want to bring in, for any place, a handsome dog who can make you a devilish good speech, look after my brother Jem, for he's your man." After a few dashes in the public meeting way, Mr. Gradgrind and a council of political sages approved of Jem, and it was resolved to send him down to Coketown, to become known there and in the neighborhood. Hence the letter Jem had last night

shown to Mrs. Sparsit, which Mr. Bounderby now held in his hand; superscribed, "Josiah Bounderby, Esquire, Banker, Coketown. Specially to introduce James Harthouse, Esquire. Thomas Gradgrind."

Within an hour of the receipt of this despatch and Mr. James Harthouse's card, Mr. Bounderby put on his hat and went down to the Hotel. There, he found Mr. James Harthouse looking out of the window, in a state of mind so disconsolate, that he was already half disposed to "go in" for something else.

"My name, sir," said his visitor, "is Josiah Bounderby of Coketown."

Mr. James Harthouse was very happy indeed (though he scarcely looked so), to have a pleasure he had long expected.

"Coketown, sir," said Bounderby, obstinately taking a chair, "is not the kind of place you have been accustomed to. Therefore, if you'll allow me—or whether you will or not, for I am a plain man—I'll tell you something about it before we go any further."

Mr. Harthouse would be charmed.

"Don't be too sure of that," said Bounderby. "I don't promise it. First of all, you see our smoke. That's meat and drink to us. It's the healthiest thing in the world in all respects, and particularly for the lungs. If you are one of those who want us to consume it, I differ from you. We are not going to wear the bottoms of our boilers out any faster than we wear 'em out now, for all the humbugging sentiment in Great Britain and Ireland."

By way of "going in" to the fullest extent, Mr. Harthouse rejoined, "Mr. Bounderby, I assure you I am entirely and completely of your way of thinking. On conviction."

"I am glad to hear it," said Bounderby. "Now you have heard a lot of talk about the work in our mills, no doubt. You have? Very good. I'll state the fact of it to you. It's the pleasantest work there is, and it's the lightest work there is, and it's the best paid work there is. More than that, we couldn't improve the mills themselves, unless we laid down Turkey carpets on the floors. Which we're not a-going to do."

"Mr. Bounderby, perfectly right."

"Lastly," said Bounderby, "as to our Hands. There's not a Hand in this town, sir, man, woman, or child, but has one ultimate object in life. That object is, to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon. Now, they're not a-going—none of 'em—ever to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon. And now you know the place."

Mr. Harthouse professed himself in the highest degree instructed and refreshed, by this condensed epitome of the whole Coketown question.

"Why, you see," replied Mr. Bounderby, "it suits my disposition to have a full understanding with a man, particularly with a public man, when I make his acquaintance. I have only one thing more to say to you, Mr. Har-

house, before assuring you of the pleasure with which I shall respond, to the utmost of my poor ability, to my friend Tom Gradgrind's letter of introduction. You are a man of family. Don't you deceive yourself by supposing for a moment that I am a man of family. I am a bit of dirty riff-raff, and a genuine scrap of tag, rag, and bobtail."

If anything could have exalted Jem's interest in Mr. Bounderby, it would have been this very circumstance. Or, so he told him.

"So now," said Bounderby, "we may shake hands on equal terms. I say, equal terms, because although I know what I am, and the exact depth of the gutter I have lifted myself out of, better than any man does, I am as proud as you are. I am just as proud as you are. Having now asserted my independence in a proper manner, I may come to how do you find yourself, and I hope you're pretty well."

The better, Mr. Harthouse gave him to understand as they shook hands, for the salubrious air of Coketown. Mr. Bounderby received the answer with favor.

"Perhaps you know," said he, "or perhaps you don't know, I married Tom Gradgrind's daughter. If you have nothing better to do than to walk up town with me, I shall be glad to introduce you to Tom Gradgrind's daughter."

"Mr. Bounderby," said Jem, "you anticipate my dearest wishes."

They went out without further discourse; and Mr. Bounderby piloted the new acquaintance who so strongly contrasted with him, to the private red brick dwelling, with the black outside shutters, the green inside blinds, and the black street door up the two white steps. In the drawing-room of which mansion, there presently entered to them the most remarkable girl Mr. James Harthouse had ever seen. She was so constrained, and yet so careless; so reserved, and yet so watchful; so cold and proud, and yet so sensitively ashamed of her husband's braggart humility—from which she shrunk as if every example of it were a cut or a blow; that it was quite a new sensation to observe her. In face she was no less remarkable than in manner. Her features were handsome; but their natural play was so suppressed and locked up, that it seemed impossible to guess at their genuine expression. Utterly indifferent, perfectly self-reliant, never at a loss, and yet never at her ease, with her figure in company with them there, and her mind apparently quite alone—it was of no use "going in" yet awhile to comprehend this girl, for she baffled all penetration.

From the mistress of the house, the visitor glanced to the house itself. There was no mute sign of a woman in the room. No graceful little adornment, no fanciful little device, however trivial, anywhere expressed her influence. Cheerless and comfortless, boastfully and doggedly rich, there the room stared at its present occupants, unsoftened and



unrelieved by the least trace of any womanly occupation. As Mr. Bounderby stood in the midst of his household gods, so those unrelenting divinities occupied their places around Mr. Bounderby, and they were worthy of one another and well matched.

"This, sir," said Bounderby, "is my wife, Mrs. Bounderby: Tom Gradgrind's eldest daughter. Loo, Mr. James Harthouse. Mr. Harthouse has joined your father's muster-roll. If he is not Tom Gradgrind's colleague before long, I believe we shall at least hear of him in connexion with one of our neighboring towns. You observe, Mr. Harthouse, that my wife is my junior. I don't know what she saw in me to marry me, but she saw something in me, I suppose, or she wouldn't have married me. She has lots of expensive knowledge, sir, political and otherwise. If you want to cram for anything, I should be troubled to recommend you to a better adviser than Loo Bounderby."

To a more agreeable adviser, or one from whom he would be more likely to learn, Mr. Harthouse could never be recommended.

"Come!" said his host. "If you're in the complimentary line, you'll get on here, for you'll meet with no competition. I have never been in the way of learning compliments myself, and I don't profess to understand the art of paying 'em. In fact, I despise 'em. But, your bringing-up was different from mine; mine was a real thing, by George! You're a gentleman, and I don't pretend to be one. I am Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, and that's enough for me. However, though I am not influenced by manners and station, Loo Bounderby may be. She hadn't my advantages—disadvantages you would call 'em, but I call 'em advantages—so you'll not waste your power, I dare say."

"Mr. Bounderby," said Jem, turning with a smile to Louisa, "is a noble animal in a comparatively natural state, quite free from the harness in which a conventional hack like myself works."

"You respect Mr. Bounderby very much," she quietly returned. "It is natural that you should."

He was disgracefully thrown out, for a gentleman who had seen so much of the world, and thought—"Now, how am I to take this?"

"You are going to devote yourself, as I gather from what Mr. Bounderby has said, to the service of your country. You have made up your mind," said Louisa, still standing before him where she had first stopped—in all the singular contrariety of her self-possession, and her being obviously so very ill at ease—"to show the nation the way out of all its difficulties."

"Mrs. Bounderby," he returned laughing, "upon my honor, no. I will make no such pretence to you. I have seen a little, here and there, up and down; I have found it all to

be very worthless, as everybody has, and as some confess they have, and some do not; and I am going in for your respected father's opinions—really because I have no choice of opinions, and may as well back them as anything else."

"Have you none of your own?" asked Louisa.

"I have not so much as the slightest predilection left. I assure you I attach not the least importance to any opinions. The result of the varieties of boredom I have undergone, is a conviction (unless conviction is too industrious a word for the lazy sentiment I entertain on the subject), that any set of ideas will do just as much good as any other set, and just as much harm as any other set. There's an English family with a capital Italian motto. What will be, will be. It's the only truth going!"

This vicious assumption of honesty in dishonesty—a vice so dangerous, so deadly, and so common—seemed, he observed, a little to impress her in his favor. He followed up the advantage, by saying in his pleasantest manner: a manner to which she might attach as much or as little meaning as she pleased: "The side that can prove anything in a line of units, tens, hundreds and thousands, Mrs. Bounderby, seems to me to afford the most fun, and to give a man the best chance. I am quite as much attached to it as if I believed it. I am quite ready to go in for it, to the same extent as if I believed it. And what more could I possibly do, if I did believe it!"

"You are a singular politician," said Louisa.

"Pardon me; I have not even that merit. We are the largest party in the state, I assure you, Mrs. Bounderby, if we all fell out of our adopted ranks and were reviewed together."

Mr. Bounderby, who had been in danger of bursting in silence, interposed here with a project for postponing the family dinner to half-past six, and taking Mr. James Harthouse in the meantime on a round of visits to the voting and interesting notabilities of Coketown and its vicinity. The round of visits was made; and Mr. James Harthouse, with a discreet use of his blue coaching, came off triumphantly, though with a considerable accession of boredom.

In the evening, he found the dinner-table laid for four, but they sat down only three. It was an appropriate occasion for Mr. Bounderby to discuss the flavor of the hap'orth of stewed eels he had purchased in the streets at eight years old, and also of the inferior water, specially used for laying the dust, with which he had washed down that repast. He likewise entertained his guest, over the soup and fish, with the calculation that he (Bounderby) had eaten in his youth at least three horses under the guise of polonies and saveloys. These recitals, Jem, in a languid manner, received with "charming!" every now and then; and they probably would have decided him to go in for Jerusalem again to-

morning, had he been less curious respecting Louisa.

"Is there nothing," he thought, glancing at her as she sat at the head of the table, where her youthful figure, small and slight, but very graceful, looked as pretty as it looked misplaced; "is there nothing that will move that face?"

Yes! By Jupiter, there was something, and here it was, in an unexpected shape! Tom appeared. She changed as the door opened, and broke into a beaming smile.

A beautiful smile. Mr. James Harthouse might not have thought so much of it, but that he had wondered so long at her impassive face. She put out her hand—a pretty little soft hand; and her fingers closed upon her brother's, as if she would have carried them to her lips.

"Ay, ay?" thought the visiter. "This whelp is the only creature she cares for. So, so!"

The whelp was presented, and took his chair. The appellation was not flattering, but not unmerited.

"When I was your age, young Tom," said Bounderby, "I was punctual, or I got no dinner!"

"When you were my age," returned Tom, "you hadn't a wrong balance to get right, and hadn't to dress afterwards."

"Never mind that now," said Bounderby. "Well, then," grumbled Tom. "Don't begin with me."

"Mrs. Bounderby," said Harthouse, perfectly hearing this under-strain as it went on; "your brother's face is quite familiar to me. Can I have seen him abroad? Or at some public school, perhaps?"

"No," she returned, quite interested, "he has never been abroad yet, and was educated here, at home. Tom, love, I am telling Mr. Harthouse that he never saw you abroad."

"No such luck, sir," said Tom.

There was little enough in him to brighten her face, for he was a sullen young fellow, and ungracious in his manner even to her. So much the greater must have been the solitude of her heart, and her need of some one on whom to bestow it. "So much the more is this whelp the only creature she has ever cared for," thought Mr. James Harthouse, turning it over and over. "So much the more. So much the more."

Both in his sister's presence, and after she had left the room, the whelp took no pains to hide his contempt for Mr. Bounderby, whenever he could indulge it without the observation of that independent man, by making wry faces, or shutting one eye. Without responding to these telegraphic communications, Mr. Harthouse encouraged him much in the course of the evening, and showed an unusual liking for him. At last, when he rose to return to his hotel, and was a little doubtful whether he knew the way by night, the whelp immediately

proffered his services as guide, and turned out with him to escort him thither.

## CHAPTER XIX.

It was very remarkable that a young gentleman who had been brought up under one continuous system of unnatural restraint, should be a hypocrite; but it was certainly the case with Tom. It was very strange that a young gentleman who had never been left to his own guidance for five consecutive minutes, should be incapable at last of governing himself; but so it was with Tom. It was altogether unaccountable that a young gentleman whose imagination had been strangled in his cradle, should be still inconvenienced by its ghost in the form of grovelling sensualities; but such a monster, beyond all doubt, was Tom.

"Do you smoke?" asked Mr. James Harthouse, when they came to the hotel.

"I believe you!" said Tom.

He could do no less than ask Tom up; and Tom could do no less than go up. What with a cooling drink adapted to the weather, but not so weak as cool; and what with a rarer tobacco than was to be bought in those parts; Tom was soon in a highly free and easy state at his end of the sofa, and more than ever disposed to admire his new friend at the other end.

Tom blew his smoke aside, after he had been smoking a little while, and took an observation of his friend. "He don't seem to care about his dress," thought Tom, "and yet how capitally he does it. What an easy swell he is!"

Mr. James Harthouse, happening to catch Tom's eye, remarked that he drank nothing, and filled his glass with his own negligent hand.

"Thank'ee," said Tom. "Thank'ee. Well, Mr. Harthouse, I hope you have had about a dose of old Bounderby to-night." Tom said this with one eye shut up again, and looking over his glass knowingly, at his entertainer.

"A very good fellow indeed!" returned Mr. James Harthouse.

"You think so, don't you?" said Tom. And shut up his eye again.

Mr. James Harthouse smiled; and rising from his end of the sofa, and lounging with his back against the chimney-piece, so that he stood before the empty fire-grate as he smoked, in front of Tom, and looking down at him, observed:

"What a comical brother-in-law you are!"

"What a comical brother-in-law old Bounderby is, I think you mean," said Tom.

"You are a piece of caustic, Tom," retorted Mr. James Harthouse.

There was something so very agreeable in being so intimate with such a waistcoat; in being called Tom, by such a voice; in being on such off-hand terms so soon, with such a

pair of whiskers; that Tom was uncommonly pleased with himself.

"Oh!" I don't care for old Bounderby," said he, "if you mean that. I have always called old Bounderby by the same name, when I have talked about him, and I have always thought of him in the same way. I am not going to begin to be polite now, about old Bounderby. It would be rather late in the day."

"Don't mind me," returned James; "but take care when his wife is by, you know."

"His wife?" said Tom. "My sister Loo? O yes!" And he laughed, and took a little more of the cooling drink.

James Harthouse continued to lounge in the same place and attitude, smoking his segar in his own easy way, and looking pleasantly at the whelp, as if he knew himself to be a kind of agreeable demon who had only to hover over him, and he must give up his whole soul if required. It certainly did seem that the whelp yielded to this influence. He looked at his companion sneakingly, he looked at him admiringly, he looked at him boldly, and put up one leg on the sofa.

"My sister Loo?" said Tom. "*She* never cared for old Bounderby."

"That's the past tense, Tom," returned Mr. James Harthouse, striking the ash from his cigar with his little finger. "We are in the present tense, now."

"Verb neuter, not to care. Indicative mood, present tense. First person singular, I do not care; second person singular, thou dost not care; third person singular, she does not care," returned Tom.

"Good! Very quaint!" said his friend. "Though you don't mean it."

"But *I do* mean it," cried Tom. "Upon my honor! Why, you won't tell me, Mr. Harthouse, that you really suppose my sister Loo does care for old Bounderby."

"My dear fellow," returned the other, "what am I bound to suppose, when I find two married people living in harmony and happiness?"

Tom had by this time got both his legs on the sofa. If his second leg had not been already there when he was called a dear fellow, he would have put it up at that great stage of the conversation. Feeling it necessary to do something then, he stretched himself out at greater length, and, reclining with the back of his head on the end of the sofa, and smoking with an infinite assumption of negligence, turned his common face, and not too sober eyes, towards the face looking down upon him so carelessly yet so potently.

"You know our governor, Mr. Harthouse," said Tom, "and therefore you needn't be surprised that Loo married old Bounderby. She never had a lover, and the governor proposed old Bounderby, and she took him."

"Very dutiful in your interesting sister," said Mr. James Harthouse.

"Yes, but she wouldn't have been as dutiful,

and it would not have come off as easily," returned the whelp, "if it hadn't been for me."

The tempter merely lifted his eyebrows, but the whelp was obliged to go on.

"I persuaded her," he said, with an edifying air of superiority. "I was stuck into old Bounderby's bank (where I never wanted to be), and I knew I should get into scrapes there, if she put old Bounderby's pipe out; so I told her my wishes, and she came into them. She would do anything for me. It was very game of her, wasn't it?"

"It was charming, Tom!"

"Not that it was altogether so important to her as it was to me," continued Tom coolly, "because my liberty and comfort, and perhaps my getting on, depended on it; and she had no other lover, and staying at home was like staying in jail—especially when I was gone. It wasn't as if she gave up another lover for old Bounderby; but still it was a good thing in her."

"Perfectly delightful. And she gets on so placidly."

"Oh," returned Tom, with contemptuous patronage, "she's a regular girl. A girl can get on anywhere. She has settled down to the life, and *she* don't mind. The life does just as well for her, as another. Besides, though Loo is a girl, she's not a common sort of girl. She can shut herself up within herself, and think—as I have often known her sit and watch the fire—for an hour at a stretch."

"Ay, ay? Has resources of her own," said Harthouse, smoking quietly.

"Not so much of that as you may suppose," returned Tom; "for our governor had her crammed with all sorts of dry bones and sawdust. It's his system."

"Formed his daughter on his own model?" suggested Harthouse.

"His daughter? Ah! and everybody else. Why, he formed *Me* that way," said Tom.

"Impossible!"

"He did though," said Tom, shaking his head. "I mean to say, Mr. Harthouse, that when I first left home and went to old Bounderby's, I was as flat as a warming-pan, and knew no more about life, than any oyster does."

"Come, Tom! I can hardly believe that. A joke's a joke."

"Upon my soul!" said the whelp. "I am serious; I am indeed!" He smoked with great gravity and dignity for a little while, and then added, in a highly complacent tone, "Oh! I have picked up a little, since. I don't deny that. But I have done it myself; no thanks to the governor."

"And your intelligent sister?"

"My intelligent sister is about where she was. She used to complain to me that she had nothing to fall back upon, that girls usually fall back upon; and I don't see how she is to have got over that since. But *she* don't mind," he sagaciously added, puffing at his cigar again. "Girls can always get on, somehow."



"Calling at the Bank yesterday evening, for Mr. Bounderby's address, I found an ancient lady there, who seems to entertain great admiration for your sister," observed Mr. James Hart-house, throwing away the last small remnant of the cigar he had now smoked out.

"Mother Sparsit?" said Tom. "What! you have seen her already, have you?"

His friend nodded. Tom took his cigar out of his mouth, to shut up his eye (which had grown rather unmanageable) with the greater expression, and to tap his nose several times with his finger.

"Mother Sparsit's feeling for Loo is more than admiration, I should think," said Tom. "Say affection and devotion. Mother Sparsit never set her cap at Bounderby when he was a bachelor. Oh no!"

These were the last words spoken by the whelp, before a giddy drowsiness came upon him, followed by complete oblivion. He was roused from the latter state by an uneasy dream of being stirred up with a boot, and also of a voice saying: "Come, it's late. Be off!"

"Well!" he said, scrambling from the sofa. "I must take my leave of you though. I say. Yours is very good tobacco. But it's too mild."

"Yes, it's too mild," returned his entertainer.

"It's—it's ridiculously mild," said Tom. "Where's the door? Good night!"

He had another odd dream of being taken by a waiter through a mist, which, after giving him some trouble and difficulty resolved itself into the main street, in which he stood alone. He then walked home pretty easily, though not yet free from an impression of the presence and influence of his new friend—as if he were lounging somewhere in the air, in the same negligent attitude, regarding him with the same look.

The whelp went home, and went to bed. If he had had any sense of what he had done that night, and had been less of a whelp and more of a brother, he might have turned short on the road, might have gone down to the ill-smelling river that was dyed black, might have gone to bed in it for good and all, and have contained his head for ever with its filthy waters.

## CHAPTER XX.

"On my friends, the down-trodden operatives of Coketown! Oh my friends and fellow-countrymen, the slaves of an iron-handed and a griding despotism! Oh my friends and fellow-sufferers, and fellow-workmen, and fellow-men! I tell you that the hour is come, when we must rally round one another as One united power, and crumble into dust the oppressors that too long have battered upon the plunder of our families, upon the sweat of our brows, upon the labor of our hands, upon the strength of our sinews, upon the God-created glorious

rights of Humanity, and upon the holy and eternal privileges of Brotherhood!"

"Good!" "Hear, hear, hear!" "Hurrah!" and other cries, arose in many voices from various parts of the densely crowded and suffocatingly close Hall, in which the orator, perched on a stage, delivered himself of this and what other froth and fume he had in him. He had declaimed himself into a violent heat, and was as hoarse as he was hot. By dint of roaring at the top of his voice under a flaring gaslight clenching his fists, knitting his brows, setting his teeth, and pounding with his arms, he had taken so much out of himself by this time, that he was brought to a stop and called for a glass of water.

As he stood there, trying to quench his fiery face with his drink of water, the comparison between the orator and the crowd of attentive faces turned towards him, was extremely to his disadvantage. Judging him by Nature's evidence, he was above the mass in very little but the stage on which he stood. In many great respects, he was essentially below them. He was not so honest, he was not so manly, he was not so good humored; he substituted cunning for their simplicity, and passion for their safe solid sense. An ill-made high-shouldered man, with lowering brows, and his features crushed into an habitually sour expression, he contrasted most unfavorably, even in his mongrel dress, with the great body of his hearers in their plain working clothes. Strange as it always is to consider any assembly in the act of submissively resigning itself to the dreariness of some complacent person, lord or commoner, whom three-fourths of it could, by no human means, raise out of the slough of inanity to their own intellectual level, it was particularly strange, and it was even particularly affecting, to see this crowd of earnest faces, whose honesty in the main no competent observer free from bias could doubt, so agitated by such a leader.

Good! Hear hear! Hurrah! The eagerness both of attention and intention, exhibited in all the countenances, made them a most impressive sight. There was no carelessness, no languor, no idle curiosity; none of the many shades of indifference to be seen in all other assemblies, visible for one moment there. That every man felt his condition to be, somehow or other, worse than it might be; that every man considered it incumbent on him to join the rest, towards the making of it better; that every man felt his only hope to be in his allying himself to the comrades by whom he was surrounded; and that in this belief, right or wrong (unhappily wrong then), the whole of that crowd were gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest; must have been as plain to any one who chose to see what was there, as the bare beams of the roof, and the whitened brick walls. Nor could any such spectator fail to know in his own breast, that these men, through their very delusions, showed great qualities,

susceptible of being turned to the happiest and best account; and that to pretend (on the strength of sweeping axioms, howsoever cut and dried) that they went astray wholly without cause, and of their own irrational wills, was to pretend that there could be smoke without fire, death without birth, harvest without seed, anything or everything produced from nothing.

The orator having refreshed himself, wiped his corrugated forehead from left to right several times with his handkerchief folded into a pad, and concentrated all his revived forces in a sneer of great disdain and bitterness.

"But, oh my friends and brothers! Oh men and Englishmen, the down-trodden operatives of Coketown! What shall we say of that man—that working man, that I should find it necessary so to libel the glorious name—who, being practically and well acquainted with the grievances and wrongs of you, the injured pith and marrow of this land, and having heard you, with a noble and majestic unanimity that will make Tyrants tremble, resolve for to subscribe to the funds of the United Aggregate Tribunal, and to abide by the injunctions issued by that body for your benefit, whatever they may be—what, I ask you, will you say of that working man, since such I must acknowledge him to be, who, at such a time, deserts his post, and sells his flag; who, at such a time, turns a traitor and a craven and a recreant; who, at such a time, is not ashamed to make to you the dastardly and humiliating avowal that he will hold himself aloof, and will *not* be one of those associated in the gallant stand for Freedom and for Right?"

The assembly was divided at this point.—There were some groans and hisses, but the general sense of honor was much too strong for the condemnation of a man unheard. "Be sure you're right, Slackbridge!" "Put him up!" "Let's hear him!" Such things were said on many sides. Finally, one strong voice called out, "Is the man heer? If the man's heer, Slackbridge, let's hear the man himself, 'stead o' yo." Which was received with a round of applause.

Slackbridge, the orator, looked about him with a withering smile; and, holding out his right hand at arm's length (as the manner of all Slackbridges is), to still the thundering sea, waited until there was a profound silence.

"Oh my friends and fellow men," said Slackbridge then, shaking his head with violent scorn, "I do not wonder that you, the prostrate sons of labor, are incredulous of the existence of such a man. But he who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage existed, and Judas Iscariot existed, and Castlereagh existed, and this man exists!"

Here, a brief press and confusion near the stage, ended in the man himself standing at the orator's side before the concourse. He was pale and a little moved in the face—his lips especially showed it; but he stood quiet,

with his left hand at his chin, waiting to be heard. There was a chairman to regulate the proceedings, and this functionary now took the case into his own hands.

"My friends," said he, "by virtue o' my office as your president, I askes o' our friend Slackbridge, who may be a little over hetter in this business, to take his seat, whiles this man Stephen Blackpool is heern. You all know this man Stephen Blackpool. You know him awlung o' his misfort'ns, and his good name."

With that the chairman shook him frankly by the hand, and sat down again. Slackbridge likewise sat down, wiping his hot forehead—always from left to right, and never the reverse way.

"My friends," Stephen began, in the midst of a dead calm; "I ha' herd what's been spok'n o' me, and 'tis lickly that I shan't mend it. But I'd liefer you'd hearn the truth concernin myseln, fro my lips than fro onny other man's, though I never cud'n speak afore so monny, wi'out bein moydert and muddled."

Slackbridge shook his head as if he would shake it off, in his bitterness.

"I'm th' one single Hand in Bounderby's mill, o' a' the men theer, as don't caoom in wi' th' proposed reg'lations. I canna' coom in wi' 'em. My friends, I doubt their doin' yo onny good. Licker they'll do yo hurt."

Slackbridge laughed, folded his arms, and frowned sarcastically.

"But 't ant sommuch for that as I stands out. If that were aw, I'd coom in wi' th' rest. But I ha' my reasons—mine, yo see—for being hindered; not on'y now, but awlus—awlus—life long!"

Slackbridge jumped up and stood beside him, gnashing and tearing. "Oh my friends, what but this did I tell you? Oh my fellow-countrymen, what warning but this did I give you? And how shows this recreant conduct in a man on whom unequal laws are known to have fallen heavy? Oh you Englishmen, I ask you how does this subornation show in one of yourselves, who is thus consenting to his own undoing and to yours, and to your children's and your children's children's?"

There was some applause, and some crying of Shame upon the man; but the greater part of the audience were quiet. They looked at Stephen's worn face, rendered more pathetic by the homely emotions it evinced; and, in the kindness of their nature, they were more sorry than indignant.

"'Tis this Delegate's trade for t' speak," said Stephen, "an he's paid for't, an he knows his work. Let him keep to't. Let him give no heed to what I ha had'n to bear. That's not for him. That's not for nobbody but me."

There was a propriety, not to say a dignity in these words, that made the hearers yet more quiet and attentive. The same strong voice called out, "Slackbridge, let the man be heern, and howd thee tongue!" Then the place was wonderfully still.

"My brothers," said Stephen, whose low voice was distinctly heard, "and my fellow-workmen—for that yo are to me, though not, as I knows on, to this delegate heer—I ha but a word to sen, and I could sen nommore if I was to speak till Strike o' day. I know weel aw what's afore me. I know weel that yo are aw resolved to ha nommore ado wi' a man who is not wi' yo in this matther. I know weel that if I was a lying parisht i' th' road, yo'd feel it right to pass me by as a forrenner and stranger. What I ha getn, I mun mak th' best on."

"Stephen Blackpool," said the chairman, rising, "think on't again. Think on't once again, lad, afore thou'r't shunned by aw owd friends."

There was an universal murmur to the same effect, though no man articulated a word. Every eye was fixed on Stephen's face. To repent of his determination, would be to take a load from all their minds. He looked around him, and knew that it was so. Not a grain of anger with them was in his heart; he knew them, far below their surface weaknesses and misconceptions, as no one but their fellow laborer could.

"I ha thowt on't, above a bit, sir. I simply canna coom in. I mun go th' way as bays afore me. I mun tak my leave o' aw heer."

He made a sort of reverence to them by holding up his arms, and stood for the moment in that attitude; not speaking until they slowly dropped at his sides.

"Monny's the pleasant word as soom heer has spok'n wi' me; monny's the face I see heer, as I first seen when I were young and lighter heart'n than now. I ha never had no fratch afore, sin ever I were born, wi' any o' my like; Gonnows I ha' none now that's o' my makin'. Yo'il ca' me traitor and that—yo, I mean t' say," addressing Slackbridge, "but 'tis easier to ca' than mak' out. So let be."

He had moved away a pace or two to come down from the platform, when he remembered something he had not said, and returned again.

"Haply," he said, turning his furrowed face slowly about, that he might as it were individually address the whole audience, those both near and distant; "haply, when this question has been tak'n up and discosed, there'll be a threat to turn out if I'm let to work among yo. I hope I shall die ere ever such a time cooms, and I shall work solitary among yo unless it cooms—truly, I mun do't, my friends; not to brave yo, but to live. I ha nobbut work to live by; and wheerever can I go, I who ha worked sin I were no heighth at aw, in Coketown heer? I mak' no complaints o' bein turned to the wa', o' being outcasten and overlooken fro this time forrard, but I hope I shall be let to work. If there is any right for me at aw, my friends, I think 'tis that."

Not a word was spoken. Not a sound was audible in the building, but the slight rustle

of men moving a little apart, all along the centre of the room, to open a means of passing out, to the man with whom they had all bound themselves to renounce companionship. Looking at no one, and going his way with a lowly steadiness upon him that asserted nothing and sought nothing, Old Stephen, with all his troubles on his head, left the scene.

Then Slackbridge, who had kept his oratorical arm extended during the going out, as if he were repressing with infinite solicitude and by a wonderful moral power the vehement passions of the multitude, applied himself to raising their spirits. Had not the Roman Brutus, oh my British countrymen, condemned his son to death; and had not the Spartan mothers, oh my soon to be victorious friends, driven their flying children on the points of their enemies' swords? Then was it not the sacred duty of the men of Coketown, with forefathers before them, an admiring world in company with them, and a posterity to come after them, to hurl out traitors from the tents they had pitched in a sacred and a Godlike cause? The winds of Heaven answered Yes; and bore Yes, east, west, north and south. And consequently three cheers for the United Aggregate Tribunal!

Slackbridge acted as fagelman, and gave the time. The multitude of doubtful faces (a little conscience stricken) brightened at the sound, and took it up. Private feeling must yield to the common cause. Hurrah! The roof yet vibrated with the cheering when the assembly dispersed.

Thus easily did Stephen Blackpool fall into the loneliest of lives, the life of solitude among a familiar crowd. The stranger in the land who looks into ten thousand faces for some answering look and never finds it, is in cheering society as compared with him who passes ten averted faces daily, that were once the countenances of friends. Such experience was to be Stephen's now, in every waking moment of his life; at his work, on his way to it and from it, at his door, at his window, everywhere. By general consent, they even avoided that side of the street on which he habitually walked; and left it, of all the working men, to him only.

He had been for many years, a quiet, silent man, associating but little with other men, and used to companionship with his own thoughts. He had never known before, the strength of the want in his heart for the frequent recognition of a nod, a look, a word; or the immense amount of relief that had been pourec into it by drops, through such small means. It was even harder than he could have believed possible, to separate in his own conscience his abandonment by all his fellows, from a baseless sense of shame and disgrace.

The first four days of his endurance were days so long and heavy, that he began to be appalled by the prospect before him. Not only did he see no Rachael all the time, but



He avoided every chance of seeing her; for, although he knew that the prohibition did not yet formally extend to the women working in the factories, he found that some of them with whom he was acquainted were changed to him, and he feared to try others, and dreaded that Rachael might be even singled out from the rest if she were seen in his company. So, he had been quite alone during the four days, and had spoken to no one, when, as he was leaving his work at night, a young man of a very light complexion accosted him in the street.

"Your name's Blackpool, ain't it?" said the young man.

Stephen colored to find himself with his hat in his hand, in his gratitude for being spoken to, or in the suddenness of it, or both. He made a feint of adjusting the lining, and said, "Yes."

"You are the Hand they have sent to Coventry, I mean?" said Bitzer, the very light young man in question.

Stephen answered "Yes," again.

"I supposed so, from their all appearing to keep away from you. Mr. Bounderby wants to speak to you. You know his house, don't you?"

Stephen said "Yes," again.

"Then go straight up there, will you?" said Bitzer. "You're expected, and have only to tell the servant it's you. I belong to the Bank; so, if you go straight up without me (I was sent to fetch you), you'll save me a walk."

Stephen, whose way had been in the contrary direction, turned about, and betook himself as in duty bound, to the red brick castle of the giant Bounderby.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"WELL Stephen," said Bounderby, in his windy manner, "what's this I hear? What have these pests of the earth been doing to you? Come in, and speak up."

It was into the drawing-room that he was thus bidden. A tea-table was set out; and Mr. Bounderby's young wife, and her brother, and a great gentleman from London, were present. To whom Stephen made his obeisance, closing the door and standing near it, with his hat in his hand.

"This is the man I was telling you about, Harthouse," said Mr. Bounderby. The gentleman he addressed, who was talking to Mrs. Bounderby on the sofa, got up, saying in an indolent way, "Oh really?" and dawdled to the hearthrug where Mr. Bounderby stood.

"Now," said Bounderby, "speak up!"

After the four days he had passed, this address fell rudely and discordantly on Stephen's ear. Besides being a rough handling of his wounded mind, it seemed to assume that he really was the self-interested deserter he had been called.

"What were it, sir," said Stephen, "as yo were pleased to want wi' me?"

"Why, I have told you," returned Bounderby. "Speak up like a man, since you are a man, and tell us about yourself and this Combination."

"Wi' yor pardon, sir," said Stephen Blackpool, "I ha' nowt to sen about it."

Mr. Bounderby, who was always more or less like a Wind, finding something in his way here, began to blow at it directly.

"Now, look here, Harthouse," said he, "here's a specimen of 'em. When this man was here once before, I warned this man against the mischievous strangers who are always about—and who ought to be hanged wherever they are found—and I told this man that he was going in the wrong direction. Now, would you believe it, that although they have put this mark upon him, he is such a slave to them still, that he's afraid to open his lips about them?"

"I sed as I had nowt to sen, sir; not as I was fearfo' o' openin' my lips."

"You said. Ah! I know what you said; more than that, I know what you mean, you see. Not always the same thing, by the Lord Harry! Quite different things. You had better tell us at once, that that fellow Slackbridge is not in the town, stirring up the people to mutiny; and that he is not a regular qualified leader of the people; that is, a most confounded scoundrel. You had better tell us so at once; you can't deceive me. You want to tell us so. Why don't you?"

"I'm as soory as yo, sir, when the people's leaders is bad," said Stephen, shaking his head. "They taks such as offers. Haply 'tis na' the sma'est o' their misfortuns when they can get no better."

The wind began to be boisterous.

"Now, you'll think this pretty well, Harthouse," said Mr. Bounderby. "You'll think this tolerably strong. You'll say, upon my soul this is a tidy specimen of what my friends have to deal with; but this is nothing, sir! You shall hear me ask this man a question. Pray, Mr. Blackpool"—wind springing up very fast—"may I take the liberty of asking you how it happens that you refused to be in this Combination?"

"How 't happens?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Bounderby, with his thumbs in the arms of his coat, and jerking his head and shutting his eyes in confidence with the opposite wall: "how it happens."

"I'd leefor not coom to't, sir; but sin you put th' question—an not want'n t' be ill-manner'n—I'll answer. I ha passed a promess."

"Not to me, you know," said Bounderby. (Gusty weather with deceitful calms. One now prevailing.)

"O no, sir. Not to yo."

"As for me, any consideration for me has had just nothing at all to do with it," said Bounderby, still in confidence with the wall. "If only Josiah Bounderby of Coketown had

been in question, you would have joined and made no bones about it?"

"Why yes, sir. 'Tis true."

"Though he knows," said Mr. Bounderby, now blowing a gale, "that these are a set of rascals and rebels whom transportation is too good for! Now, Mr. Harthouse, you have been knocking about in the world some time. Did you ever meet with anything like that man out of this blessed country?" And Mr. Bounderby pointed him out for inspection, with an angry finger.

"Nay, ma'am," said Stephen Blackpool, staunchly protesting against the words that had been used, and instinctively addressing himself to Louisa, after glancing at her face. "Not rebels, nor yet rascals. Nowt o' th' kind, ma'am, nowt o' th' kind. They've not doon me a kindness, ma'am, as I know and feel. But there's not a dozen men amoong 'em, ma'am—a dozen! Not six—but what believes as he has doon his duty by the rest and by himseln. God forbid as I, that ha known an had'n experience o' these men aw my life—I, that ha' ett'n an droonken wi' 'em, an seet'n wi' 'em, an toil'n wi' 'em, and lov'n 'em, should fail fur to stan by 'em wi' the truth, let 'em ha doon to me what they may!"

He spoke with the rugged earnestness of his place and character—deepened, perhaps, by a proud consciousness that he was faithful to his class under all their mistrust; but he fully remembered where he was, and did not even raise his voice.

"No, ma'am, no. They're true to one another, faithfo' to one another, fectionate to one another, e'en to death. Be poor among 'em, be sick among 'em, grieve amoong 'em for onny o' th' monny causes that carries grief to the poor man's door, an they'll be tender wi' yo, gentle wi' yo, comfortable wi' yo, Chisen wi' yo. Be sure o' that, ma'am. They'd be riven to bits, ere ever they'd be different."

"In short," said Mr. Bounderby, "it's because they are so full of virtues that they have turned you adrift. Go through with it while you are about it. Out with it."

"How 'tis, ma'am," resumed Stephen, appearing still to find his natural refuge in Louisa's face, "that what is best in us fok, seems to turns us most to trouble an misfort'n, an mistake, I dunno. But 'tis so. I know 'tis, as I know the heavens is over me ahint the smoke. We 're patient too, an wants in general to do right. An' I canna think the fawt is aw wi' us."

"Now, my friend," said Mr. Bounderby, whom he could not have exasperated more, quite unconscious of it though he was, than by seeming to appeal to any one else, "if you will favor me with your attention for half a minute, I should like to have a word or two with you. You said just now, that you had nothing to tell us about this business. You are quite sure of that, before we go any further?"

"Sir, I am sure on't."

"Here's a gentleman from London present,"

Mr. Bounderby made a back-handed point at Mr. James Harthouse with his thumb, "a Parliament gentleman. I should like him to hear a short bit of dialogue between you and me, instead of taking the substance of it—for I know precious well, beforehand, what it will be; nobody knows better than I do, take notice!—instead of receiving it on trust, from my mouth."

Stephen bent his head to the gentleman from London, and showed a rather more troubled mind than usual. He turned his eyes involuntarily to his former refuge, but at a look from that quarter (expressive though instantaneous) he settled them on Mr. Bounderby's face.

"Now, what do you complain of?" spake Mr. Bounderby.

"I ha' not coom heer, sir," Stephen reminded him, "to complain. I coom for that I were sent for."

"What," repeated Mr. Bounderby, folding his arms, "do you people, in a general way, complain of?"

Stephen looked at him with some little irresolution for a moment, and then seemed to make up his mind.

"Sir, I were never good at showin o't, though I ha had'n my share in feeling o't. 'Deed we are in a muddle, sir. Look round town—so rich as 'tis—and see th' numbers o' people as has been broughten into bein heer, fur to weave, an to card, and to piece out a livin, aw the same one way, somehow, twixt their cradles an their graves. Look how we live, an wheer we live, an in what numbers, an by what chances, and wi' what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus a goin, an how they never works us no nigher to onny dis'ant object—ceptin awlus, Death.—Look how you considers of us, an writes of us, an talks of us, and goes up wi' yor deputations to Secretaries o' State 'bout us, and how yo are awlus right, an how we are awlus wrong, and never had'n no reason in us sin ever we were born. Look how this ha grown and grown. sir, bigger an bigger, broader an broader, harder an harder, fro year to year, fro generation unto generation. Who can look on't sir, and fairly tell a man 'tis not a muddle?"

"Of course," said Mr. Bounderby. "Now perhaps you'll let the gentleman know, how you would set this muddle (as you're so fond of calling it) to rights."

"I donno, sir. I canna be expecten to't. 'Tis not me as should be looken to for that, sir. 'Tis them as is put ower me, an ower aw the rest of us. What do they tak upon themselves, sir, if not to do't?"

"I'll tell you something towards it, at any rate," returned Mr. Bounderby. "We will make an example of half a dozen Slackbridges. We'll indict the blackguards for felony, and get 'em shipped off to penal settlements."

Stephen gravely shook his head.

"Don't tell me we won't, man," said Mr. Boun-

derby, by this time blowing a hurricane, "because we will, I tell you!"

"Sir," returned Stephen, with the quiet confidence of absolute certainty, "if yo was t' tak a hundred Slackbridges—aw as there is, an aw the number ten times tow'd—an was t' sew 'em up in separate sacks, an sink 'em in the deepest ocean as were made ere ever dry land coom to be, yo'd leave the muddle just wheer 'tis. Mischeevous strangers!" said Stephen, with an anxious smile; "when ha we not heern, I am sure, sin ever we can call to mind, o' th' mischeevous strangers! 'Tis not by *them* the trouble's made, sir. 'Tis not wi' *them* 't commences. I ha no favor for 'em—I ha no reason to favor 'em—but 'tis hopeless an useless to dream o' takin them from their trade, 'stead o' takin their trade fro them! Aw that's now about me in this room were heer afore I coom, an will be heer when I am gone. Put that clock aboard a ship an pack it off to Norfolk Island, an the time will go on just the same. So 'tis wi' Slackbridge every bit."

Reverting for a moment to his former refuge, he observed a cautionary movement of her eyes towards the door. Stepping back, he put his hand upon the lock. But, he had not spoken out of his own will and desire; and he felt it in his heart a noble return for his late injurious treatment, to be faithful to the last to those who had repudiated him. He stayed to finish what was in his mind.

"Sir, I canna, wi' my little learning an my common way, tell the genelman what will better aw this—though some working-men o' this town could, above my powers—but I can tell him what I know will never do't. The strong hand will never do't. Vict'ry and triumph will never do't. Agreein fur to mak one side unnat'rally awlus and for ever right, and toother side unnat'rally awlus and for ever wrong, will never, never do't. Nor yet lettin alone will never do't. Let thousands upon thousands alone, aw leadin the like lives and aw faw'en into the like muddle, and they will be as one, an yo will be as anoother, wi' a black unpassable world betwixt yo, just as long or short a time as sitch like misery can last. Not drawin nigh to fok, wi' kindness an patience an cheery ways, that so draws nigh to one another in their monny troubles, and so cherishes one another in their distresses wi' what they need themseln—like, I humbly believe, as no people the gentleman ha seen in aw his travels can beat—will never do't till th' Sun turns t' ice. Last o' aw, ratin 'em as so much Power, and reg'latin 'em as if they was figures in a soom, or machines; wi'out loves and likeins, wi'out memories and inclinations wi'out souls to weary an souls to hope—when aw goes quiet, draggin on wi' 'em as if they'd nout o' th' kind, an when aw goes unquiet, reproachin 'em fur their want o' sitch humanly feelins in their dealins wi' yo—this will never do't, sir, till God's work is onmade."

Stephen stood with the open door in his hand, waiting to know if anything more were expected of him.

"Just stop a moment," said Mr. Bounderby, excessively red in the face "I told you, the last time you were here with a grievance, that you had better turn about and come out of that. And I also told you, if you remember, that I was up to the gold spoon look-out."

"I were not up to't myseln, sir; I do assure yo."

"Now, it's clear to me," said Mr. Bounderby, "that you are one of those chaps who have always got a grievance. And you go about, sowing it and raising crops. That's the business of *your* life, my friend."

Stephen shook his head, mutely protesting that indeed he had other business to do for his life.

"You are such a waspish, raspish, ill-conditioned chap, you see," said Mr. Bounderby, "that even your own Union, the men who know you best, will have nothing to do with you. I never thought those fellows could be right in anything; but I tell you what! I so far go along with them for a novelty, that I'll have nothing to do with you either."

Stephen raised his eyes quickly to his face.

"You can finish off what you're at," said Mr. Bounderby, with a meaning nod, "and then go elsewhere."

"Sir, yo know weel," said Stephen expressively, "that if I canna get work wi' yo, I canna get it elseweher."

The reply was, "What I know, I know; and what you know, you know. I have no more to say about it."

Stephen glanced at Louisa again, but her eyes were raised to his no more; therefore, with a sigh, and saying, barely above his breath, "Heaven help us aw in this world!" he departed.

## CHAPTER XXII.

It was falling dark when Stephen came out of Mr. Bounderby's house. The shadows of night had gathered so fast, that he did not look about him when he closed the door, but plodded straight along the street. Nothing was further from his thoughts than the curious old woman he had encountered on his previous visit to the same house, when he heard a step behind him that he knew, and, turning, saw her in Rachael's company.

He saw Rachael first, as he had heard her only.

"Ah, Rachael, my dear! Missns, thou wi' her!"

"Well, and now you are surprised to be sure, and with reason I must say," the old woman returned. "Here I am again, you see."

"But how wi' Rachael?" said Stephen, falling into their step, walking between them, and looking from the one to the other.



"Why, I come to be with this good lass pretty much as I came to be with you," said the old woman cheerfully, taking the reply upon herself. "My visiting time is later this year than usual, for I have been rather troubled with shortness of breath, and so put it off till the weather was fine and warm. For the same reason I don't make all my journey in one day, but divide it into two days, and get a bed to-night at the Travellers' Coffee House down by the railroad, (a nice clean house,) and go back, Parliamentary, at six in the morning. Well, but what has this to do with this good lass, says you? I'm going to tell you. I have heard of Mr. Bounderby being married. I read it in the paper, where it looked grand—oh, it looked fine!" the old woman dwelt on it with strange enthusiasm; "and I want to see his wife. I have never seen her yet. Now, if you'll believe me, she hasn't come out of that house since noon to-day. So, not to give her up too easily, I was waiting about, a little last bit more, when I passed close to this good lass two or three times; and her face being so friendly I spoke to her, and she spoke to me. There!" said the old woman to Stephen, "you can make all the rest out for yourself now, a deal shorter than I can, I dare say!"

Once again, Stephen had to conquer an instinctive propensity to dislike this old woman, though her manner was as honest and simple as a manner possibly could be. With a gentleness that was as natural to him as he knew it to be to Rachael, he pursued the subject that interested her in her old age.

"Well, missus," said he, "I ha seen the lady, and she were young and hansom. Wi' fine dark thinkin eyes, and a still way, Rachael, as I ha never seen the like on."

"Young and handsome. Yes!" cried the old woman, quite delighted. "As bonny as a rosel. And what a happy wife!"

"Aye, missus, I suppose she be," said Stephen. But with a doubtful glance at Rachael.

"Suppose she be? She must be. She's your master's wife," returned the old woman.

Stephen nodded assent. "Though as to master," said he, glancing again at Rachael, "not master onny more. That's aw enden twixt him and me."

"Have you left his work, Stephen?" asked Rachael, anxiously and quickly.

"Whv, Rachael," he replied, "whether I ha left'n his work, or whether his work ha left'n me, cooms t' th' same. His work and me are parted. 'Tis as weel so—better, I were thinkin when yo coom up wi' me. It would ha brought'n trouble upon trouble if I had stayed theer. Haply 'tis a kindness to monny that I go; haply 'tis a kindness to myseln; anyways it mun be done. I mun turn my face fro Coketown fur th' time, an seek a fort'n, dear, by beginnin fresh."

"Where will you go, Stephen?"

"I donno t'night," said he, lifting off his hat,

and smoothing his thin hair with the flat of his hand. "But I'm not a goin' t'night, Rachael; nor yet t' morrow. Tan't easy overmuct, I know wheer t' turn, but a good heart will coom to me."

Herein, too, the sense of even thinking unselfishly aided him. Before he had so much as closed Mr. Bounderby's door, he had reflected that at least his being obliged to go away was good for her, as it would save her from the chance of being brought into question for not withdrawing from him. Though it would cost him a hard pang to leave her, and though he could think of no similar place in which his condemnation would not pursue him, perhaps it was almost a relief to be forced away from the endurance of the last four days, even to unknown difficulties and distresses.

So he said, with truth, "I'm more leetsome Rachael, under 't, than I couldn ha believed." It was not her part to make his burden heavier. She answered with her comforting smile, and the three walked on together.

Age, especially when it strives to be self-reliant and cheerful, finds much consideration among the poor. The old woman was so decent and contented, and made so light of her infirmities, though they had increased upon her since her former interview with Stephen, that they both took an interest in her. She was too sprightly to allow of their walking at a slow pace on her account, but she was very grateful to be talked to, and very willing to talk to any extent: so, when they came to their part of the town, she was more brisk and vivacious than ever.

"Coom to my poor place, missus," said Stephen, "and tak a coop o' tea. Rachael will coom then, and arterwards I'll see thee safe t' thy Travellers' lodgin. 'T may be long, Rachael, ere ever I ha th' chance o' thy company agene."

They complied, and the three went on to the house where he lodged. When they turned into the narrow street, Stephen glanced at his window with a dread that always haunted his desolate home; but it was open, as he had left it, and no one was there. The evil spirit of his life had flitted away again, months ago, and he had heard no more of her since. The only evidences of her last return now, were the scantier movables in his room, and the graver hair upon his head.

He lighted a candle, set out his little tea-board, got hot water from below, and brought in small portions of tea and sugar, a loaf, and some butter, from the nearest shop. The bread was new and crusty, the butter fresh, and the sugar lump, of course—in fulfilment of the standard testimony of the Coketown magistrates, that these people lived like princes, sir. Rachael made the tea (so large a party necessitated the borrowing of a cup), and the visiter enjoyed it mightily. It was the first glimpse of sociality the host had had for many days. He too, with the world a wide heath before him, enjoyed the meal—again in

corroboration of the magnates, as exemplifying the utter want of calculation on the part of these people, sir.

"I ha never thowt yet, missus," said Stephen, "o' askin thy name."

The old lady announced herself as "Mrs. Pegler."

"A widdier, I think?" said Stephen.

"Oh, many long years!" Mrs. Pegler's husband (one of the best on record) was already dead, by Mrs. Pegler's calculation, when Stephen was born.

"Twere a bad job too, to lose so good a one," said Stephen. "Onny children?"

Mrs. Pegler's cup, rattling against her saucer as she held it, denoted some nervousness on her part. "No," she said. "Not now, not now."

"Dead, Stephen," Rachael softly hinted.

"'m soary I ha spok'u on't," said Stephen. "I ought t' ha hadn in my mind as I might touch a sore place. I—I blame myseln."

While he excused himself, the old lady's cup rattled more and more. "I had a son," she said, curiously distressed, and not by any of the usual appearances of sorrow; "and he did well, wonderfully well. But he is not to be spoken of if you please. He is——" Putting down her cup, she moved her hands as if she would have added, by her action, "dead!" Then, she said, aloud, "I have lost him."

Stephen had not yet got the better of his having given the old lady pain, when his landlady came stumbling up the narrow stairs, and calling him to the door, whispered in his ear. Mrs. Pegler was by no means deaf, for she caught a word as it was uttered.

"Boulderby!" she cried, in a suppressed voice, starting up from the table. "Oh, hide me! Don't let me be seen for the world.—Don't let him come up till I have got away. Pray, pray!" She trembled, and was excessively agitated; getting behind Rachael, when Rachael tried to reassure her; and not seeming to know what she was about.

"But hearken, missus, hearken;" said Stephen, astonished, "'Tisut Mr. Boulderby; 'tis his wife. Yor not fearfo' o' her. Yo was hey-go-mad about her, but an hour sin."

"But are you sure it's the lady and not the gentleman?" she asked, still trembling.

"Certain sure!"

"Well then, pray don't speak to me, nor yet take any notice of me," said the old woman. "Let me be quite to myseln in this corner."

Stephen nodded; looking to Rachael for an explanation, which she was quite unable to give him; took the candle, went down stairs, and in a few moments returned lighting Louisa into the room. She was followed by the whelp.

Rachael had risen, and stood apart with her shawl and bonnet in her hand, when Stephen, himself profoundly astonished by this visit, put the candle on the table. Then

he too stood, with his doubled hand upon the table near it, waiting to be addressed.

For the first time in her life, Louisa had come into one of the dwellings of the Coketown Hands; for the first time in her life, she was face to face with anything like individuality in connexion with them. She knew of their existence by hundreds and by thousands. She knew what results in work a given number of them would produce, in a given space of time. She knew them in crowds passing to and from their nests, like ants or beetles. But she knew from her reading infinitely more of the ways of toiling insects, than of these toiling men and women.

Something to be worked so much and paid so much, and there ended; something to be infallibly settled by laws of supply and demand; something that blundered against those laws, and floundered into difficulty; something that was a little pinched when wheat was dear, and over-rate itself when wheat was cheap; something that increased at such a rate of per centage, and yielded such another per centage of crime, and such another per centage of pauperism; something wholesale, of which vast fortunes were made; something that occasionally rose like a sea, and did some harm and waste (chiefly to itself), and fell again; this she knew the Coketown Hands to be. But, she had scarcely thought more of separating them into units, than of separating the sea itself into its component drops.

She stood for some moments looking round the room. From the few chairs, the few books, the common prints, and the bed, she glanced to the two women, and to Stephen.

"I have come to speak to you, in consequence of what passed just now. I should like to be serviceable to you, if you will let me. Is this your wife?"

Rachael raised her eyes, and they sufficiently answered no, and dropped again.

"I remember," said Louisa, reddening at her mistake; "I recollect, now, to have heard your domestic misfortunes spoken of, though I was not attending to the particulars at the time. It was not my meaning to ask a question that would give pain to any one here. If I should ask any other question that may happen to have that result, give me credit, if you please, for being in ignorance how to speak to you as I ought."

As Stephen had but a little while ago instinctively addressed himself to her, so she now instinctively addressed herself to Rachael. Her manner was short and abrupt, yet faltering and timid.

"He has told you what has passed between himself and my husband? You would be his first resource, I think."

"I have heard the end of it, young lady," said Rachael.

"Did I understand, that, being rejected by one employer, he would probably be rejected by all? I thought he said as much?"

"The chances are very small, young lady—next to nothing—for a man who gets a bad name among them."

"What shall I understand that you mean by a bad name?"

"The name of being troublesome."

"Then, by the prejudices of his own class, and by the prejudices of the other, he is sacrificed alike? Are the two so deeply separated in this town, that there is no place whatever, for an honest workman between them?"

Rachael shook her head in silence.

"He fell into suspicion," said Louisa, "with his fellow-weavers, because he had made a promise not to be one of them. I think it must have been to you that he made that promise. Might I ask you why he made it?"

Rachael burst into tears. "I didn't seek it of him, poor lad. I prayed him to avoid trouble for his own good, little thinking he'd come to it through me. But I know he'd die a hundred deaths, ere ever he'd break his word. I know that of him well."

Stephen had remained quietly attentive in his usual thoughtful attitude, with his hand at his chin. He now spoke in a voice rather less steady than usual.

"No one, excepting myself, can ever know what honor, or what love, or respect, I bear to Rachael, or wi' what cause. When I passed that promess, I tow'd her true, she were th' Angel o' my life. 'Twere a solemn promess. 'Tis gone for me, fur ever."

Louisa turned her head to him, and bent it with a deference that was new in her. She looked from him to Rachael, and her features softened. "What will you do?" she asked him. And her voice had softened too.

"Weel, maam," said Stephen, making the best of it, with a smile; "when I ha finished off, I mun quit this part, an try another. Fortune or misfortune, a man can but try; there's nowt to be done wi'out tryin'—cept laying doon an dying."

"How will you travel?"

"Afoot, my kind leddy, afoot."

Louisa colored, and a purse appeared in her hand. The rustling of a bank-note was audible, as she unfolded one and laid it on the table.

"Rachael, will you tell him—for you know how, without offence—that this is freely his, to help him on his way? Will you entreat him to take it?"

"I canna' do that, young lady," she answered, turning her head aside; "bless you for thinking o' the poor lad wi' such tenderness. But 'tis for him to know his heart, and what is right according to it."

Louisa looked, in part incredulous, in part frightened, in part overcome with quick sympathy, when this man of so much self command, who had been so plain and steady through the late interview, lost his composure in a moment, and now stood with his hand before his face. She stretched out hers, as if she would have

touched him; then checked herself, and remained still.

"Not e'en Rachael," said Stephen, when he stood again with his face uncovered, "could mak sitch a kind offerin, by onny words, kinder. 'T show that I'm not a man wi'out reason and gratitude, I'll tak two pound. I'll borrow't for t' pay't back.—'T will be the sweetest work as ever I ha done, that puts it in my power t' acknowledge once more my lastin thankfulness for this present action."

She was fain to take up the note again, and to substitute the much smaller sum he had named. He was neither courtly, nor handsome, nor picturesque, in any respect; and yet his manner of accepting it, and of expressing his thanks without more words, had a grace in it that Lord Chesterfield could not have taught his son in a century.

Tom had sat upon the bed, swinging one leg and sucking his walking-stick with sufficient unconcern, until the visit had attained this stage. Seeing his sister ready to depart, he got up, rather hurriedly, and put in a word.

"Just wait a moment, Loo! Before we go, I should like to speak to him a moment. Something comes into my head. If you'll step out on the stairs, Blackpool, I'll mention it. Never mind a light, man!" Tom was remarkably impatient of his moving towards the cupboard, to get one. "It don't want a light."

Stephen followed him out, and Tom closed the room door, and held the lock in his hand.

"I say!" he whispered. "I think I can do you a good turn. Don't ask me what it is, because it may not come to anything. But there's no harm in my trying."

His breath fell like a flame of fire on Stephen's ear; it was so hot.

"That was our light porter at the Bank," said Tom, "who brought you the message to-night. I call him our light porter, because I belong to the Bank too."

Stephen thought "What a hurry he is in!" He spoke so comsundly.

"Well!" said Tom. "Now look here! When are you off?"

"I'd say's Monday," replied Stephen, considering. "Why, sir, Friday or Saturday, nigh 'bout."

"Friday or Saturday," said Tom. "Now, look here! I am not sure that I can do you the good turn I want to do you—that's my sister, you know, in your room—but I may be able to, and if I should not be able to, there's no harm done. So I tell you what. You'll know our light porter again?"

"Yes sure," said Stephen.

"Very well," returned Tom. "When you leave work of a night, between this and your going away, just hang about the Bank an hour or so, will you? Don't take on, as if you meant anything, if he should see you hanging about there; because I shan't put him up to speak to you, unless I find I can do you the service I



want to do you. In that case he'll have a note or a message for you, but not else. Now look here! You are sure you understand."

He had wormed a finger, in the darkness, through a button-hole of Stephen's coat, and was screwing that corner of the garment tight up, round and round, in an extraordinary manner.

"I understand, sir," said Stephen.

"Now look here!" repeated Tom. "Be sure you don't make any mistake then, and don't forget. I shall tell my sister as we go home, what I have in view, and she'll approve, I know. Now look here! You're all right, are you? You understand all about it? Very well then. Come along, Loo!"

He pushed the door open as he called to her, but did not return into the room, or wait to be lighted down the narrow stairs. He was at the bottom when she began to descend, and was in the street before she could take his arm.

Mrs. Pegler remained in her corner until the brother and sister were gone, and until Stephen came back with the candle in his hand. She was in a state of inexpressible admiration of Mrs. Bounderby, and, like an unaccountable old woman, wept, "because she was such a pretty dear." Yet Mrs. Pegler was so flurried lest the object of her admiration should return by any chance, or anybody else should come, that her cheerfulness was ended for that night. It was late too, to people who rose early and worked hard; therefore the party broke up; and Stephen and Rachael escorted their mysterious acquaintance to the door of the Travellers' Coffee House, where they parted from her.

They walked back together to the corner of the street where Rachael lived, and as they drew nearer and nearer to it, silence crept upon them. When they came to the dark corner where their unfrequent meetings always ended, they stopped, still silent, as if both were afraid to speak.

"I shall strive t' see thee agen, Rachael, afore I go, but if not——"

"Thou wilt not, Stephen, I know. 'Tis better that we make up our minds to be open wi' one another."

"Thou'rt awlus right. 'Tis bolder and better. I ha' been thinkin, then, Rachael, that as 'tis but a day or two that remains, 'twere better for thee, my dear, not t' be seen wi' me. 'T might bring thee into trouble, fur no good."

"'Tis not for that, Stephen, that I mind. But thou know'st our old agreement. 'Tis for that."

"Well, well," said he. "'Tis better, onny-ways."

"Thou'lt write to me, and tell me all that happens, Stephen?"

"Yes. What can I say now, but Heaven be wi' thee, Heaven bless thee, Heaven thank thee and reward thee!"

"May it bless thee, Stephen, too, in all thy

wanderings, and send thee peace and rest at last!"

"I tow'd thee, my dear," said Stephen Blackpool—"that night—that I would never see or think o' onnything that angered me, but thou, so much better than me, should'st be beside it. Thou'rt beside it now. Thou mak'st me see it wi' a better eye. Bless thee. Good night. Good bye!"

It was but a hurried parting in the common street, yet it was a sacred remembrance to these two common people. Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds, the poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the moment of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you!

Stephen worked the next day, and the next, uncheered by a word from any one, and shunned in all his comings and goings as before. At the end of the second day, he saw land; at the end of the third, his loom stood empty.

He had overstayed his hour in the street outside the Bank, on each of the two first evenings; and nothing had happened there, good or bad. That he might not be remiss in his part of the engagement, he resolved to wait full two hours, on this third and last night.

There was the lady who had once kept Mr. Bounderby's house, sitting at the first floor window as he had seen her before; and there was the light porter, sometimes talking with her there, and sometimes looking over the blind below which had BANK upon it, and sometimes coming to the door and standing on the steps for a breath of air. When he first came out, Stephen thought he might be looking for him, and passed near; but the light porter only cast his winking eyes upon him slightly, and said nothing.

Two hours were a long stretch of lounging about, after a long day's labor. Stephen sat upon the step of a door, leaned against a wall under an archway, strolled up and down, listened for the church clock, stopped and watched children playing in the street. Some purpose or other is so natural to every one, that a mere loiterer always looks and feels remarkable.—When the first hour was out, Stephen even began to have an uncomfortable sensation upon him of being for the time a disreputable character.

Then came the lamplighter, and two lengthening lines of light all down the long perspective of the street, until they were blended and lost in the distance. Mrs. Sparsit closed the first floor window, drew down the blind, and went up stairs. Presently, a light went up stairs after her, passing first the fanlight of

the door, and afterwards the two staircase windows, on its way up. By and by, one corner of the second floor blind was disturbed, as if Mrs. Sparsit's eye were there; also the other corner, as if the light porter's eye were on that side. Still no communication was made to Stephen. Much relieved when the two hours were at last accomplished, he went away at a quick pace, as a recompense for so much loitering.

He had only to take leave of his landlady, and lie down on his temporary bed upon the floor; for his bundle was made up for to-morrow, and all was arranged for his departure. He meant to be clear of the town very early: before the Hands were in the streets.

It was barely daybreak, when with a parting look round his room, mournfully wondering whether he should ever see it again, he went out. The town was as entirely deserted as if the inhabitants had abandoned it, rather than hold communication with him. Everything looked wan at that hour. Even the coming sun made but a pale waste in the sky, like a sad sea.

By the place where Rachael lived, though it was not in his way; by the red brick streets; by the great silent factories, not trembling yet; by the railway, where the danger-lights were waning in the strengthening day; by the railway's crazy neighborhood, half pulled down and half built up; by scattered red brick villas, where the besmoked evergreens were sprinkled with a dirty powder, like untidy snuff-takers; by coal-dust paths and many varieties of ugliness; Stephen got to the top of the hill, and looked back.

Day was shining radiantly upon the town then, and the bells were going for the morning work. Domestic fires were not yet lighted, and the high chimneys had the sky to themselves. Puffing out their poisonous volumes, they would not be long in hiding it; but, for half an hour, some of the many windows were golden, which showed the Coketown people a sun eternally in eclipse, through a medium of smoked glass.

So strange to turn from the chimneys to the birds. So strange to have the road-dust on his feet instead of the coal-grit. So strange to have lived to his time of life, and yet to be beginning like a boy this summer morning! With these musings in his mind, and his bundle under his arm, Stephen took his attentive face along the high road. And the trees arched over him, whispering that he left a true and loving heart behind.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. JAMES HARTHOUSE, "going in" for his adopted party, soon began to score. With the aid of a little more coaching for the political sages, a little more genteel listlessness for the general society, and a tolerable management of the assumed honesty in dishonesty, most effective and most patronized of the polite dead-

ly sins, he speedily came to be considered of much promise. The not being troubled with earnestness was a grand point in his favor, enabling him to take to the hard Fact fellows with as good a grace as if he had been born one of the tribe, and to throw all other tribes overboard, as conscious imposters.

"Whom none of us believe, my dear Mrs. Bounderby, and who do not believe themselves. The only difference between us and the professors of virtue or benevolence, or philanthropy—never mind the name—is, that we know it is all meaningless, and say so; while they know it equally and will never say so."

Why should she be shocked or warned by this reiteration? It was not so unlike her father's principles, and her early training, that it need startle her. Where was the great difference between the two schools, when each chained her down to material realities, and inspired her with no faith in anything else? What was there in her soul for James Hart-house to destroy, which Thomas Gradgrind had nurtured there in its state of innocence?

It was even the worse for her at this pass; that in her mind—implanted there before her eminently practical father began to form it—a struggling disposition to believe in a wider and higher humanity than she had ever heard of, constantly strove with doubts and resentments. With doubts, because the aspiration had been so laid waste in her youth. With resentments, because of the wrong that had been done her, if it were indeed a whisper of the truth. Upon a nature long accustomed to self-suppression, thus torn and divided, the Hart-house philosophy came as a relief and justification. Everything being hollow, and worthless, she had missed nothing and sacrificed nothing. What did it matter, she had said to her father, when he proposed her husband. What did it matter, she said still.—With a scornful self-reliance, she asked herself, what did anything matter—and went on.

Towards what? Step by step, onward and downward, toward some end, yet so gradually that she believed herself to remain motionless. As to Mr. Hart-house, whither he tended, he neither considered nor cared. He had no particular design or plan before him; no energetic wickedness ruffled his lassitude. He was as much amused and interested, at present, as it became so fine a gentleman to be; perhaps even more than it would have been consistent with his reputation to confess. Soon after his arrival he languidly wrote to his brother, the honorable and jocular member, that the Bounderbys were "great fun;" and further, that the female Bounderby, instead of being the Gorgon he had expected, was young and remarkably pretty. After that, he wrote no more about them, and devoted his leisure chiefly to their house. He was very often in their house, in his flittings and visitings about the Coketown district; and was much encouraged by Mr.

Bounderby. It was quite in Mr. Bounderby's gusty way to boast to all his world that *he* didn't care about your highly connected people, but that if his wife Tom Gradgrind's daughter did, she was welcome to their company.

Mr. James Harthouse began to think it would be a new sensation, if the face which changed so beautifully for the whelp, would change for him.

He was quick enough to observe; he had a good memory, and did not forget a word of the brother's revelations. He interwove them with everything he saw of the sister, and he began to understand her. To be sure, the better and profounder part of her character was not within his scope of perception; for in natures, as in seas, depth answers unto depth; but he soon began to read the rest with a student's eye.

Mr. Bounderby had taken possession of a house and grounds, about fifteen miles from the town, and accessible within a mile or two, by a railway striding on many arches over a wild country, undermined by deserted coalpits, and spotted at night by fires and black shapes of engines. This country, gradually softening towards the neighborhood of Mr. Bounderby's retreat, there mellowed into a rustic landscape, golden with heath, and snowy with hawthorn in the spring of the year, and tremulous with leaves and their shadows all the summer time. The bank had foreclosed a mortgage on the property thus pleasantly situated: effected by one of the Coketown magnates: who, in his determination to make a shorter cut than usual to an enormous fortune, overspeculated himself afterwards by about two hundred thousand pounds. These accidents did sometimes happen in the best regulated families of Coketown, though the bankrupts had no connexion whatever with the improvident classes.

It afforded Mr. Bounderby supreme satisfaction to instal himself in this snug little estate, and with demonstrative humility to grow cabbages in the flower-garden. He delighted to live, barrack fashion, among the elegant furniture, and he bulled the very pictures with his origin. "Why, sir," he would say to a visitor, "I am told that Nickits," the late owner, "gave seven hundred pound for that Sea-beach. Now, to be plain with you, if I ever, in the whole course of my life, take seven looks at it, at a hundred pound a look, it will be as much as I shall do. No, by George! I don't forget that I am Josiah Bounderby, of Coketown. For years upon years, the only pictures in my possession, or that I could have got into my possession by any means, unless I stole 'em, were the engravings of a man shaving himself in a boot, on the blacking bottles that I was overjoyed to use in cleaning boots with, and that I sold when they were empty for a farthing a-piece, and glad to get it!"

Then he would address Mr. Harthouse in the same style.

"Harthouse, you have a couple of horses down here. Bring half a dozen more if you like, and we'll find room for 'em. There's stabling in this place for a dozen horses; and unless Nickits is belied, he kept the full number. A round dozen of 'em, sir. When that man was a boy, he went to Westminster School. Went to Westminster School as a King's Scholar, when I was principally living on garbage, and sleeping in market baskets. Why, if I wanted to keep a dozen horses—which I don't, for one's enough for me—I couldn't bear to see 'em in their stalls here, and think what my own lodging used to be. I couldn't look at 'em, sir, and not order 'em out. Yet so things come round. You see this place; you know what sort of a place it is; you areaw are that there's not a completer place of its size in this kingdom or elsewhere—I don't care where—and here, got into the middle of it, like a maggot into a nut, is Josiah Bounderby. While Nickits, (as a man came into my office, and told me yesterday,) Nickits, who used to act in Latin, in the Westminster School plays, with the chief justices and nobility of this country applauding him till they were black in the face, is drivelling at this minute—drivelling, sir!—in a fifth floor, up a narrow dark back street in Antwerp."

It was among the leafy shadows of this retirement, in the long sultry summer days, that Mr. Harthouse began to prove the face which had set him wondering when he first saw it, and to try if it would change for him.

"Mrs. Bounderby, I esteem it a most fortunate accident that I find you alone here. I have for some time had a particular wish to speak to you."

It was not by any wonderful accident that he found her, the time of day being that at which she was always alone, and the place being her favorite resort. It was an opening in a dark wood, where some felled trees lay, and where she would sit watching the fallen leaves of last year, as she had watched the falling ashes at home.

He sat down beside her, with a glance at her face.

"Your brother. My young friend Tom—"

Her color brightened, and she turned to him with a look of interest. "I never in my life," he thought, "saw anything so remarkable and so captivating as the lighting of those features!" His face betrayed his thoughts—perhaps without betraying him, for it might have been according to its instructions so to do.

"Pardon me. The expression of your sisterly interest is so beautiful—Tom should be so proud of it—I know this is inexcusable, but I am so compelled to admire."

"Being so impulsive," she said composedly.

"Mrs. Bounderby, no; you know I make no pretence with you. You know I am a sordid piece of human nature, ready to sell myself at any time for any reasonable sum, and al-



together incapable of any Arcadian proceeding whatever."

"I am waiting," she returned, "for your further reference to my brother."

"You are rigid with me, and I deserve it. I am as worthless as a dog, as you will find, except that I am not false—not false. But you surprised and started me from my subject, which was your brother. I have an interest in him."

"Have you an interest in anything, Mr. Harthouse?" she asked, half incredulously and half gratefully.

"If you had asked me when I first came here, I should have said no. I must say now—even at the hazard of appearing to make a pretence, and of justly awakening your incredulity—yes."

She made a slight movement, as if she were trying to speak, but could not find voice; at length she said, "Mr. Harthouse, I give you credit for being interested in my brother."

"Thank you. I claim to deserve it. You know how little I do claim, but I will go that length. You have done so much for him, you are so fond of him; your whole life, Mrs. Bounderby, expresses such charming self-forgetfulness on his account—pardon me again—I am running wide of the subject. I am interested in him for his own sake."

She had made the slightest action possible, as if she would have risen in a hurry and gone away. He had turned the course of what he said at that instant, and she remained.

"Mrs. Bounderby," he resumed, in a lighter manner, and yet with a show of effort in assuming it, which was even more expressive than the manner he dismissed; "it is no irreparable offence in a young fellow of your brother's years, if he is heedless, inconsiderate and expensive—a little dissipated, in the common phrase. Is he?"

"Yes."

"Allow me to be frank. Do you think he games at all?"

"I think he makes bets." Mr. Harthouse waiting, as if that were not her whole answer, she added, "I know he does."

"Of course he loses?"

"Yes."

"Everybody loses who bets. May I hint at the probability of your sometimes supplying him with money for these purposes?"

She sat, looking down; but, at this question, raised her eyes searchingly and a little resentfully.

"Acquit me of impertinent curiosity, my dear Mrs. Bounderby. I think Tom may be gradually falling into trouble, and I wish to stretch out a helping hand to him from the depths of my wicked experience. Shall I say again, for his sake? Is that necessary?"

She seemed to try to answer, but nothing came of it.

"Candidly to confess every thing that has occurred to me," said James Harthouse, again gliding with the same appearance of effort into

his more airy manner; "I will confide to you my doubt whether he has had many advantages. Whether—forgive my plainness—whether any great amount of confidence is likely to have been established between himself and his most worthy father."

"I do not," said Louisa, flushing with her own great remembrance in that wise, "think it likely."

"Or, between himself, and—I may trust to your perfect understanding of my meaning I am sure—and his highly esteemed brother-in-law."

She flushed deeper and deeper, and was burning red when she replied in a fainter voice, "I do not think that likely, either."

"Mrs. Bounderby," said Harthouse, after a short silence, "may there be a better confidence between yourself and me? Tom has borrowed a considerable sum of you?"

"You will understand, Mr. Harthouse," she returned, after some indecision: she had been more or less uncertain, and troubled throughout the conversation, and yet had in the main preserved her self-contained manner: "you will understand that if I tell you what you press to know, it is not by way of complaint or regret. I would never complain of anything, and what I have done I do not in the least regret."

"So spirited, too!" thought James Harthouse.

"When I married, I found that my brother was even at that time heavily in debt. Heavily for him, I mean. Heavily enough to oblige me to sell some trinkets. They were no sacrifice. I sold them very willingly. I attached no value to them. They were quite worthless to me."

Either she saw in his face that he knew, or she only feared in her conscience that he knew, that she spoke of some of her husband's gifts. She stopped, and reddened again. If he had not known it before, he would have known it then, though he had been a much duller man than he was.

"Since then, I have given my brother, at various times, what money I could spare: in short, what money I have had. Confiding in you at all, on the faith of the interest you profess for him, I will not do so by halves. Since you have been in the habit of visiting here, he has wanted in one sum as much as a hundred pounds. I have not been able to give it to him. I have felt uneasy for the consequences of his being so involved, but I have kept these secrets until now, when I trust them to your honor. I have held no confidence with any one, because—you anticipated my reason just now." She abruptly broke off.

He was a ready man, and he saw, and seized, an opportunity here of presenting her own image to her, slightly disguised as her brother.

"Mrs. Bounderby, though a graceless person, of the world worldly, I feel the utmost interest, I assure you, in what you tell me. I

cannot possibly be hard upon your brother. I understand and share the wise consideration with which you regard his errors. With all possible respect both for Mr. Gradgrind and for Mr. Bounderby, I think I perceive that he has not been fortunate in his training. Bred at a disadvantage towards the society in which he has his part to play, he rushes into these extremes for himself, from opposite extremes that have long been forced—with the very best intentions we have no doubt—upon him. Mr. Bounderby's fine bluff English independence, though a most charming characteristic, does not—as we have agreed—invite confidence. If I might venture to remark that it is the least in the world deficient in that delicacy to which a youth mistaken, a character misconceived, and abilities misdirected, would turn for relief and guidance, I should express what it presents to my own view."

As she sat looking straight before her, across the changing lights upon the grass into the darkness of the wood beyond, he saw in her face her application of his very distinctly uttered words.

"All allowance," he continued, "must be made. I have one great fault to find with Tom, however, which I cannot forgive, and for which I take him heavily to account."

Louisa turned her eyes to his face, and asked him what fault was that?

"Perhaps," he returned, "I have said enough. Perhaps it would have been better, on the whole, if no allusion to it had escaped me."

"You alarm me, Mr. Harthouse. Pray let me know it."

"To relieve you from needless apprehension—and as this confidence regarding your brother, which I prize, I am sure, above all possible things, has been established between us—I obey. I cannot forgive him for not being more sensible, in every word, look, and act of his life, of the affection of his best friend; of the devotion of his best friend; of her unselfishness; of her sacrifice. The return he makes her, within my observation, is a very poor one. What she has done for him demands his constant love and gratitude, not his ill-humor and caprice. Careless fellow as I am, I am not so indifferent, Mrs. Bounderby, as to be regardless of this vice in your brother, or inclined to consider it a venial offence."

The wood floated before her, for her eyes were suffused with tears. They rose from a deep well, long concealed, and her heart was filled with acute pain that found no relief in them.

"In a word, it is to correct your brother in this, Mrs. Bounderby, that I most aspire. My better knowledge of his circumstances, and my direction and advice in extricating him—rather valuable, I hope, as coming from a scapegrace on a much larger scale—will give me some influence over him, and all I gain I shall certainly use towards this end. I have

said enough, and more than enough. I seem to be protesting that I am a sort of good fellow, when, upon my honor, I have not the least intention to make any protestation to that effect, and openly announce that I am nothing of the sort. Yonder, among the trees," he added, having lifted up his eyes and looked about; for he had watched her closely until now; "is your brother himself; no doubt, just come down. As he seems to be loitering in this direction, it may be as well, perhaps, to walk towards him, and throw ourselves in his way. He has been very silent and doleful of late. Perhaps, his brotherly conscience is touched—if there are such things as consciences. Though, upon my honor, I hear of them much too often to believe in them."

He assisted her to rise, and she took his arm, and they advanced to meet the whelp. He was idly beating the branches as he lounged along; or he stopped viciously to rip the moss from the trees with his stick. He was startled when they came upon him while he was engaged in this latter pastime, and his color changed.

"Halloa!" he stammered, "I didn't know you were here."

"Whose name, Tom," said Mr. Harthouse, putting his hand upon his shoulder and turning him, so that they all three walked towards the house together, "have you been carving on the trees?"

"Whose name?" returned Tom. "Oh! You mean what girl's name?"

"You have a suspicious appearance of inscribing some fair creature's on the bark, Tom."

"Not much of that, Mr. Harthouse, unless some fair creature with a slashing fortune at her own disposal would take a fancy to me. Or she might be as ugly as she was rich, without any fear of losing me. I'd carve her name as often as she liked."

"I'm afraid you are mercenary, Tom."

"Mercenary," repeated Tom. "Who is not mercenary? Ask my sister."

"Have you so proved it to be a failing of mine, Tom?" said Louisa, showing no other sense of his discontent and ill-nature.

"You know whether the cap fits you, Loo," returned her brother sulkily. "If it does, you can wear it."

"Tom is misanthropical to day, as all bored people are, now and then," said Mr. Harthouse. "Don't believe him, Mrs. Bounderby. He knows much better. I shall disclose some of his opinions of you, privately expressed to me, unless he relents a little."

"At all events, Mr. Harthouse," said Tom, softening in his admiration of his patron, but shaking his head sullenly too, "you can't tell her that I ever praised her for being mercenary. I may have praised her for being the contrary, and I should do it again if I had as good reason. However, never mind this now; it's not very interesting to you, and I am sick of the subject."

They walked on to the house, where Louisa quitted her visiter's arm and went in. He stood looking after her, as she ascended the steps, and passed into the shadow of the door; then put his hand upon her brother's shoulder again, and invited him with a confidential nod to a walk in the garden.

"Tom, my fine fellow, I want to have a word with you."

They had stopped among a disorder of roses—it was part of Mr. Bounderby's humility to keep Nickit's roses on a reduced scale—and Tom sat down on a terrace-parapet, plucking buds and picking them to pieces; while his powerful Familiar stood over him, with a foot upon the parapet, and his figure easily resting on the arm supported by that knee. They were just visible from her window. Perhaps she saw them.

"Tom, what's the matter?"

"Oh! Mr. Harthouse," said Tom, with a groan, "I am hard up, and bothered out of my life."

"My good fellow, so am I."

"You!" returned Tom. "You are the picture of independence. Mr. Harthouse, I am in a horrible mess. You have no idea what a state I have got myself into—what a state my sister might have got me out of, if she would only have done it."

He took to biting the rose-buds now, and tearing them away from his teeth with a hand that trembled like an infirm old man's. After one exceedingly observant look at him, his companion relapsed into his lightest air.

"Tom, you are inconsiderate; you expect too much of your sister. You have had money of her, you dog, you know you have."

"Well, Mr. Harthouse, I know I have.—How else was I to get it? Here's old Bounderby always boasting that at my age he lived upon two-pence a month, or something of that sort. Here's my father drawing what he calls a line, and tying me down to it from a baby, neck and heels. Here's my mother, who never has anything of her own, except her complaints. What is a fellow to do for money, and where am I to look for it, if not to my sister!"

He was almost crying, and scattered the buds about by dozens. Mr. Harthouse took him persuasively by the coat.

"But my dear Tom, if your sister has not got it—"

"Not got it, Mr. Harthouse? I don't say she has got it. I may have wanted more than she was likely to have got. But then she ought to get it. She could get it. It's of no use pretending to make a secret of matters now, after what I have told you already; you know she didn't marry old Bounderby for her own sake, or for his sake, but for my sake. Then why doesn't she get what I want, out of him, for my sake? She is not obliged to say what she is going to do with it; she is sharp enough; she could manage to coax it out of him, if she chose. Then why doesn't she

choose, when I tell her of what consequence it is? But no. There she sits in his company like a stone, instead of making herself agreeable and getting it easily. I do 't know what you may call this, but I call it unnatural conduct."

There was a piece of ornamental water immediately below the parapet, on the other side, into which Mr. James Harthouse had a very strong inclination to pitch Mr. Thomas Gradgrind, Junior, as the injured men of Coketown threatened to pitch their property into the Atlantic. But he preserved his easy attitude; and nothing more solid went over the stone balustrades than the accumulated rosebuds now floating about, a little surface-island.

"My dear Tom," said Harthouse, "let me try to be your banker."

"For God's sake," replied Tom, suddenly, "don't talk about bankers!" And very white he looked, in contrast with the roses. Very white.

Mr. Harthouse, as a thoroughly well bred man, accustomed to the best society, was not to be surprised—he could as soon have been affected—but he raised his eyelids a little more, as if they were lifted by a feeble touch of wonder. Albeit it was as much against the precepts of his school to wonder, as it was against the doctrines of the Gradgrind College.

"What is the present need, Tom? Three figures? Out with them. Say what they are."

"Mr. Harthouse," returned Tom, now actually crying; and his tears were better than his injuries, however pitiful a figure he made; "it's too late; the money is of no use to me at present. I should have had it before, to be of use to me. But I am very much obliged to you; you're a true friend."

A true friend! "Whelp, whelp!" thought Mr. Harthouse, lazily; "what an Ass you are!"

"And I take your offer as a great kindness," said Tom, grasping his hand. "As a great kindness, Mr. Harthouse."

"Well," returned the other, "it may be of more use by and by. And, my good fellow, if you will open your bedevilments to me when they come thick upon you, I may show you better ways out of them than you can find for yourself."

"Thank you," said Tom, shaking his head dismally, and chewing rosebuds. "I wish I had known you sooner, Mr. Harthouse."

"Now, you see, Tom," said Mr. Harthouse in conclusion; himself tossing over a rose or two, as a contribution to the island, which was always drifting to the wall as if it wanted to become a part of the mainland; "every man is selfish in everything he does, and I am exactly like the rest of my fellow creatures. I am desperately intent;" the languor of his desperation being quite tropical; "on your softening towards your sister—which you ought to do;



and on your being a more loving and agreeable sort of brother—which you ought to be.”

“I will be, Mr. Harthouse.”

“No time like the present, Tom. Begin at once.”

“Certainly I will. And my sister Loo shall say so.”

“Having made which bargain, Tom,” said Harthouse, clapping him on the shoulder again, with an air which left him at liberty to infer—as he did, poor fool—that this condition was imposed upon him in mere careless good nature, to lessen his sense of obligation, “we will tear ourselves asunder until dinner-time.”

When Tom appeared before dinner, though his mind seemed heavy enough, his body was on the alert; and he appeared before Mr. Bounderby came in. “I didn’t mean to be cross, Loo,” he said, giving her his hand, and kissing her. “I know you are fond of me, and you know I am fond of you.”

After this, there was a smile upon Louisa’s face that day, for some one else. Alas, for some one else!

“So much the less is the whelp the only creature that she cares for,” thought James Harthouse, reversing the reflection of his first day’s knowledge of her pretty face. “So much the less, so much the less.”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

The next morning was too bright a morning for sleep, and James Harthouse rose early, and sat in the pleasant bay window of his dressing-room, smoking the rare tobacco that had had so wholesome an influence on his young friend. Reposing in the sunlight, with the fragrance of his eastern pipe about him, and the dreamy smoke vanishing into the air, so rich and soft with summer odors, he reckoned up his advantages as an idle winner might count his gains. He was not at all bored for the time, and could give his mind to it.

He had established a confidence with her, from which her husband was excluded. He had established a confidence with her, that absolutely turned upon her indifference towards her husband, and the absence, now and at all times, of any congeniality between them. He had artfully, but plainly assured her, that he knew her heart in its last most delicate recesses; he had come so near to her through its tenderest sentiment; he had associated himself with that feeling; and the barrier behind which she lived, had melted away. All very odd, and very satisfactory!

And yet he had not, even now, any earnest wickedness of purpose in him. Publicly and privately, it were much better for the age in which he lived, that he and the legion of whom he was one were designedly bad, than indifferent and purposeless. It is the drifting icebergs setting with any current anywhere, that wreck the ships.

When the Devil goeth about like a roaring lion, he goeth about in a shape by which few

but savages and hunters are attracted. But, when he is trimmed, varnished, and polished, according to the mode; when he is aware of vice, and aware of virtue, used up as to brimstone, and used up as to bliss; then, whether he take to the serving out of red tape, or to the kindling of red fire, he is the very Devil.

So, James Harthouse reclined in the window, indolently smoking, and reckoning up the steps he had taken on the road by which he happened to be travelling. The end to which it led was before him, pretty plainly; but he troubled him self with no calculations about it. What will be, will be.

As he had rather a long ride to take that day—for there was a public occasion “to do” at some distance, which afforded a tolerable opportunity of going in for the Gradgrind men—he dressed early, and went down to breakfast. He was anxious to see if she had relapsed since the previous evening. No. He resumed where he had left off. There was a look of interest for him again.

He got through the day as much (or as little) to his own satisfaction, as was to be expected under the fatiguing circumstances; and came riding back at six o’clock. There was a sweep of some half mile between the lodge and the house, and he was riding along at a foot’s pace over the smooth gravel, once Nickit’s, when Mr. Bounderby burst out of the shrubbery with such violence as to make his horse shy across the road.

“Hartouse!” cried Mr. Bounderby. “Have you heard?”

“Heard what?” said Harthouse, soothing his horse, and inwardly favoring Mr. Bounderby with no good wishes.

“Then you *haven’t* heard!”

“I have heard you, and so has this brute.—I have heard nothing else.”

Mr. Bounderby, red and hot, planted himself in the centre of the path before the horse’s head, to explode his bombshell with more effect.

“The Bank’s robbed!”

“You don’t mean it!”

“Robbed last night, sir. Robbed in an extraordinary manner. Robbed with a false key.”

“Of much?”

Mr. Bounderby, in his desire to make the most of it, really seemed mortified by being obliged to reply. “Why, no; not of very much. But it might have been.”

“Of how much?”

“Oh! as a sum—if you stick to a sum—not more than a hundred and fifty pound,” said Bounderby, with impatience. “But it’s not the sum; it’s the fact. It’s the fact of the Bank being robbed, that’s the important circumstance. I am surprised you don’t see it.”

“My dear Bounderby,” said James, dismounting, and giving his bridle to his servant, “I do see it; and am as overcome as you can possibly desire me to be, by the spectacle

afforded to my mental view. Nevertheless, I may be allowed, I hope, to congratulate you—which I do with all my soul, I assure you—on your not having sustained a greater loss."

"Thank'ee," replied Bounderby, in a short, ungracious manner. "But I tell you what. It might have been twenty thousand pound."

"I suppose it might."

"Suppose it might? By the Lord, you *may* suppose so. By George!" said Mr. Bounderby, with sundry menacing nods and shakes of his head, "It might have been twice twenty. There's no knowing what it would have been, or wouldn't have been, as it was, but for the fellows' being disturbed."

Louisa had come up now, and Mrs. Sparsit, and Bitzer.

"Here's Tom Gradgrind's daughter knows pretty well what it might have been, if you don't," blustered Bounderby. "Dropped, sir, as if she was shot, when I told her! Never knew her do such a thing before. Does her credit, under the circumstances, in my opinion."

She still looked faint and pale. James Harthouse begged her to take his arm; and as they moved on very slowly, asked how the robbery had been committed.

"Why, I am going to tell you," said Bounderby, irritably giving his arm to Mrs. Sparsit. "If you hadn't been so mighty particular about the sum, I should have begun to tell you before. You know this lady (for she *is* a lady), Mrs. Sparsit?"

"I have already had the honor"—

"Very well. And this young man, Bitzer, you saw him too on the same occasion?" Mr. Harthouse inclined his head in assent, and Bounderby knuckled his forehead.

"Very well. They live at the Bank. You know they live at the Bank perhaps? Very well. Yesterday afternoon, at the close of business hours, everything was put away as usual. In the iron room that this young fellow sleeps outside of, there was—never mind how much. In the little safe in young Tom's closet, the safe used for petty purposes, there was a hundred and fifty odd pound."

"Hundred and fifty-four, seven, one," said Bitzer.

"Come!" retorted Bounderby, stopping to wheel round upon him, "let's have none of your interruptions. It's enough to be robbed while you're snoring because you're too comfortable, without being put right with your four seven ones. I didn't snore, myself, when I was your age, let me tell you. I hadn't victuals enough to snore. And I didn't four seven one. Not if I knew it."

Bitzer knuckled his forehead again, in a sneaking manner, and seemed at once particularly impressed and depressed by the instance last given of Mr. Bounderby's moral abstinence.

"A hundred and fifty odd pound," resumed Mr. Bounderby. "That sum of money, young Tom locked in his safe; not a very strong safe,

but that's no matter now. Everything was left all right. Some time in the night, while this young fellow snored—Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am, you say you have heard him snore?"

"Sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "I cannot say that I have heard him precisely snore, and therefore must not make that statement. But on winter evenings, when he has fallen asleep at his table, I have heard him, what I should prefer to describe as partially choke. I have heard him on such occasions produce sounds of a nature similar to what may be sometimes heard in Dutch clocks. Not," said Mrs. Sparsit, with a lofty sense of giving strict evidence, "that I would convey any imputation on his moral character. Far from it. I have always considered Bitzer a young man of the most upright principle; and to that I beg to bear my testimony."

"Well!" said the exasperated Bounderby, "while he was snoring, or choking, or Dutch-clocking, or something or other—being asleep—some fellows, somehow whether previously concealed in the house or not remains to be seen, got to young Tom's safe, forced it, and abstracted the contents. Being then disturbed, they made off; letting themselves out at the main door, and double-locking it again (it was double-locked, and the key under Mrs. Sparsit's pillow) with a false key, which was picked up in the street near the Bank, about twelve o'clock to-day. No alarm takes place, till this chap, Bitzer, turns out this morning and begins to open and prepare the offices for business. Then, looking at Tom's safe, he sees the door ajar, and finds the lock forced, and the money gone."

"Where is Tom, by the by?" asked Harthouse, glancing round.

"He has been helping the police," said Bounderby, "and stays behind at the Bank. I wish these fellows had tried to rob me when I was at his time of life. They would have been out of pocket, if they had invested eighteen pence in the job; I can tell 'em that."

"Is anybody suspected?"

"Suspected? I should think there was somebody suspected. Egod!" said Bounderby, relinquishing Mrs. Sparsit's arm to wipe his heated head, "Josiah Bounderby of Coketown is not to be plundered and nobody suspected. No, thank you!"

Might Mr. Harthouse inquire Who was suspected?

"Well," said Bounderby, stopping and facing about to confront them all, "I'll tell you. It's not to be mentioned everywhere; it's not to be mentioned anywhere; in order that the scoundrels concerned (there's a gang of 'em) may be thrown off their guard. So take this in confidence. Now wait a bit." Mr. Bounderby wiped his head again. "What should you say to; here he violently exploded, "to a Hand being in it?"

"I hope," said Harthouse, lazily, "not our friend Blackpot?"

"Say Pool instead of Pot, sir," returned Bounderby, "and that's the man."

Louisa faintly uttered some word of incredulity and surprise.

"O yes! I know!" said Bounderby, immediately catching at the sound. "I know! I am used to that! I know all about it. They are the finest people in the world, these fellows are. They have got the gift of the gab, they have. They only want to have their rights explained to them, they do. But I tell you what. Show me a dissatisfied Hand, and I'll show you a man that's fit for anything bad, I don't care what it is."

Another of the popular fictions of Coketown, which some pains had been taken to disseminate—and which some people really believed.

"But I am acquainted with these chaps," said Bounderby. "I can read 'em off, like books. Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am, I appeal to you. What warning did I give that fellow, the first time he set foot in the house, when the express object of his visit was to know how he could knock Religion over, and floor the Established Church? Mrs. Sparsit, in point of high connexions, you are on a level with the aristocracy,—did I say, or did I not say, to that fellow, 'you can't hide the truth from me; you are not the kind of fellow I like; you'll come to no good?'"

"Assuredly, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "you did, in a highly impressive manner, give him such an admonition."

"When he shocked you, ma'am," said Bounderby; "when he shocked your feelings?"

"Yes, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, with a meek shake of her head, "he certainly did so. Though I do not mean to say but that my feelings may be weaker on such points—more foolish, if the term is preferred—than they might have been, if I had always occupied my present position."

Mr. Bounderby stared with a bursting pride at Mr. Harthouse, as much as to say, "I am the proprietor of this female, and she's worth your attention, I think?" Then, resumed his discourse.

"You can recall for yourself, Harthouse, what I said to him when you saw him. I didn't mince the matter with him. I am never mealy with 'em. I know 'em. Very well, sir. Three days after that, he bolted. Went off, nobody knows where: as my mother did in my infancy—only with this difference, that he is a worse subject than my mother, if possible. What did he do before he went? What do you say?" Mr. Bounderby, with his hat in his hand, gave a beat upon the crown at every little division of his sentences, as if it were a tambourine; "to his being seen—night after night—watching the Bank?—To his lurking about there—after dark?—To its striking Mrs. Sparsit—that he could be lurking for no good?—To her calling Bitzer's attention to him, and their both taking notice of him?—And to its appearing on inquiry

to-day—that he was also noticed by the neighbors?" Having come to the climax, Mr. Bounderby, like an oriental dancer, put his tambourine on his head.

"Suspicious," said James Harthouse, "certainly."

"I think so, sir," said Bounderby, with a defiant nod. "I think so. But there are more of 'em in it. There's an old woman. One never hears of these things till the mischief's done; all sorts of defects are found out in the stable door after the horse is stolen; there's an old woman turns up now. An old woman who seems to have been flying into town on a broomstick, every now and then. *She* watches the place a whole day before this fellow begins, and, on the night when you saw him, she steals away with him and holds a council with him—I suppose, to make her report on going off duty, and be d—d to her."

There was such a person in the room that night, and she shrunk from observation, thought Louisa.

"This is not all of 'em, even as we already know 'em," said Bounderby, with many nods of hidden meaning. "But I have said enough for the present. You'll have the goodness to keep it quiet, and mention it to no one. It may take time, but we shall have 'em. It's policy to give 'em line enough, and there's no objection to that."

"Of course, they will be punished with the utmost rigor of the law, as notice-boards observe," replied James Harthouse, "and serve them right. Fellows who go in for Banks must take the consequences. If there were no consequences, we should all go in for Banks." He had gently taken Louisa's parasol from her hand, and had put it up for her; and she walked under its shade, though the sun did not shine there.

"For the present, Loo Bounderby," said her husband, "here's Mrs. Sparsit to look after. Mrs. Sparsit's nerves have been acted upon by this business, and she'll stay here a day or two. So make her comfortable."

"Thank you very much, sir," that discreet lady observed, "but pray do not let My comfort be a consideration. Anything will do for Me."

It soon appeared that if Mrs. Sparsit had a failing in her association with that domestic establishment, it was that she was so excessively regardless of herself and regardful of others, as to be a nuisance. On being shown her chamber, she was so dreadfully sensible of its comforts as to suggest the inference that she would have preferred to pass the night on the mangle in the laundry. True, the Powlers and the Scadgerses were accustomed to splendor, "but it is my duty to remember," Mrs. Sparsit was fond of observing with a lofty grace: particularly when any of the domestics were present, "that what I was, I am no longer. Indeed," said she, "if I could altogether cancel the remem-



brance that Mr. Sparsit was a Fowler, or that I myself am related to the Scadgers family; or if I could even revoke the fact, and make myself a person of common descent and ordinary connexions; I would gladly do so. I should think it, under existing circumstances, right to do so." The same Hermitical state of mind led to her renunciation of made dishes and wines at dinner, until fairly commanded by Mr. Bounderby to take them; when she said, "Indeed, you are very good, sir;" and departed from a resolution of which she had made rather formal and public announcement, to "wait for the simple mutton." She was likewise deeply apologetic for wanting the salt; and, feeling amiably bound to bear out Mr. Bounderby to the fullest extent in the testimony he had borne to her nerves, occasionally sat back in her chair and silently wept; at which periods a tear of large dimensions, like a crystal ear-ring, might be observed (or rather, must be, for it insisted on public notice) sliding down her Roman nose.

But Mrs. Sparsit's greatest point, first and last, was her determination to pity Mr. Bounderby. There were occasions when in looking at him she was involuntarily moved to shake her head, as who should say "Alas! poor Yorick!" After allowing herself to be betrayed into these evidences of emotion, she would force a lambent brightness, and would be fitfully cheerful, and would say, "You have still good spirits, sir, I am thankful to find;" and would appear to hail it as a blessed dispensation that Mr. Bounderby bore up as he did. One idiosyncrasy for which she often apologised, she found it excessively difficult to conquer. She had a curious propensity to call Mrs. Bounderby "Miss Gradgrind," and yielded to it some three or four score times in the course of the evening. Her repetition of this mistake covered Mrs. Sparsit with modest confusion; but indeed, she said, it seemed so natural to say Miss Gradgrind: whereas, to persuade herself that the young lady whom she had had the happiness of knowing from a child could be really and truly Mrs. Bounderby, she found almost impossible. It was a further singularity of this remarkable case, that the more she thought about it, the more impossible it appeared; "the differences," she observed, "being such—"

In the drawing-room after dinner, Mr. Bounderby tried the case of the robbery, examined the witnesses, made notes of the evidence, found the suspected persons guilty, and sentenced them to the extreme punishment of the law. That done, Bitzer was dismissed to town with instructions to recommend Tom to come home by the mail-train.

When candles were brought, Mrs. Sparsit murmured, "Don't be low, sir. Pray let me see you cheerful, sir, as I used to do." Mr. Bounderby, upon whom these consolations had begun to produce the effect of making him, in a bull-headed, blundering way, sen-

timental, sighed like some large sea-animal. "I cannot bear to see you so, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit. "Try a hand at backgammon, sir, as you used to do when I had the honor of living under your roof." "I haven't played backgammon, ma'am," said Mr. Bounderby, "since that time." "No, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, soothingly, "I am aware that you have not. I remember that Miss Gradgrind takes no interest in the game. But I shall be happy, sir, if you will condescend."

They played near a window, opening on the garden. It was a fine night; not moonlight, but sultry and fragrant. Louisa and Mr. Harthouse strolled out into the garden, where their voices could be heard in the stillness, though not what they said. Mrs. Sparsit, from her place at the backgammon board, was constantly straining her eyes to pierce the shadows without. "What's the matter, ma'am?" said Mr. Bounderby; "you don't see a fire, do you?" "Oh dear no, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "I was thinking of the dew." "What have you got to do with the dew, ma'am?" said Mr. Bounderby. "It's not myself, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "I am fearful of Miss Gradgrind's taking cold." "She never takes cold," said Mr. Bounderby. "Really sir?" said Mrs. Sparsit. And was affected with a cough in her throat.

When the time drew near for retiring, Mr. Bounderby took a glass of water. "Oh, sir!" said Mrs. Sparsit. "Not your sherry warm, with lemon peel and nutmeg?" "Why, I have got out of the habit of taking it now, ma'am," said Mr. Bounderby. "The more's the pity, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit; "you are losing all your good old habits. Cheer up, sir! If Miss Gradgrind will permit me, I will offer to make it for you, as I have often done."

Miss Gradgrind readily permitting Mrs. Sparsit to do anything she pleased, that considerate lady made the beverage, and handed it to Mr. Bounderby. "It will do you good, sir. It will warm your heart. It is the sort of thing you want, and ought to take, sir." And when Mr. Bounderby said, "Your health, ma'am!" she answered with great feeling, "I thank you, sir. The same to you, and happiness also." Finally, she wished him good night, with great pathos; and Mr. Bounderby went to bed, with a maudlin persuasion that he had been crossed in something tender, though he could not, for his life, have mentioned what it was.

Long after Louisa had undressed and lain down, she watched and waited for her brother's coming home. That could hardly be, she knew, until an hour past midnight; but in the country silence, which did anything but calm the trouble of her thoughts, time lagged wearily. At last, when the darkness and stillness had seemed for hours to thicken one another, she heard the bell at the gate. She felt as though she would have been glad that it rang on until daylight; but it ceased, and the circles of its last sound spread out

fainter and wider in the air, and all was dead again.

She waited yet some quarter of an hour, as she judged. Then she arose, put on a loose robe, and went out of her room in the dark, and up the staircase to her brother's room. His door being shut, she softly opened it and spoke to him, approaching his bed with a noiseless step.

She kneeled down beside it, passed her arm over his neck, and drew his face to hers. She knew that he only feigned to be asleep, but she said nothing to him.

He started by and by as if he were just then awakened, and ask who that was, and what was the matter?

"Tom, have you anything to tell me? If ever you loved me in your life, and have anything concealed from every one besides, tell it to me."

"I don't know what you mean, Loo. You have been dreaming."

"My dear brother," she laid her head down on his pillow, and her hair flowed over him as if she would hide him from every one but herself; "is there nothing that you have to tell me? Is there nothing you can tell me, if you will. You can tell me nothing that will change me. O Tom, tell me the truth!"

"I don't know what you mean, Loo."

"As you lie here alone, my dear, in the melancholy night, so you must lie somewhere one night, when even I, if I am living then, shall have left you. As I am here beside you, barefoot, unclothed, undistinguishable in darkness, so must I lie through all the night of my decay, until I am dust. In the name of that time, Tom, tell me the truth now!"

"What is it you want to know?"

"You may be certain," in the energy of her love she took him to her bosom as if he were a child; "that I will not reproach you. You may be certain that I will be compassionate and true to you. You may be certain that I will save you at whatever cost. O Tom, have you nothing to tell me? Whisper very softly. Say only 'yes,' and I shall understand you!"

She turned her ear to his lips, but he remained doggedly silent.

"Not a word, Tom?"

"How can I say Yes, or how can I say No, when I don't know what you mean? Loo, you are a brave kind girl, worthy I begin to think of a better brother than I am. But I have nothing more to say. Go to bed, go to bed."

"You are tired," she whispered presently, more in her usual way.

"Yes, I am quite tired out."

"You have been so hurried and disturbed to-day. Have any fresh discoveries been made?"

"Only those you have heard of, from—him."

"Tom, have you said to any one that we made a visit to those people, and that we saw those three together?"

"No. Did not you yourself particularly ask

me to keep it quiet, when you asked me to go there with you?"

"Yes. But I did not know then what was going to happen."

"Nor I neither. How could I?"

He was very quick upon her with this retort.

"Ought I to say, after what has happened," said his sister, standing by the bed—she had gradually withdrawn herself and risen, "that I made that visit? Should I say so? Must I say so?"

"Good Heavens, Loo," returned her brother, "you are not in the habit of asking my advice. Say what you like. If you keep it to yourself, I shall keep it to myself. If you disclose it, there's an end of it."

It was too dark for either to see the other's face; but each seemed very attentive, and to consider before speaking.

"Tom, do you believe the man I gave the money to, is really implicated in this crime?"

"I don't know. I don't see why he shouldn't be."

"He seemed to me an honest man."

"Another person may seem to you dishonest, and yet not be so."

There was a pause, for he had hesitated and stopped.

"In short," resumed Tom, as if he had made up his mind, "if you come to that, perhaps I was so far from being altogether in his favor, that I took him outside the door to tell him quietly, that I thought he might consider himself very well off to get such a windfall as he had got from my sister, and that I hoped he would make a good use of it. You remember whether I took him out or not. I say nothing against the man; he may be a very good fellow, for anything I know; I hope he is."

"Was he offended by what you said?"

"No, he took it pretty well; he was civil enough. Where are you, Loo?" He sat up in bed and kissed her. "Good night, my dear, good night!"

"You have nothing more to tell me?"

"No. What should I have? You wouldn't have me tell you a lie?"

"I wouldn't have you do that to-night, Tom, of all the nights in your life; many and much happier as I hope they will be."

"Thank you, my dear Loo. I am so tired, that I am sure I wonder I don't say anything, to get to sleep. Go to bed, go to bed."

Kissing her again, he turned round, drew the coverlet over his head, and lay as still as if that time had come by which she had adjured him. She stood for some time at the bedside before she slowly moved away. She stopped at the door, looked back when she had opened it, and asked him if he had called her? But he lay still, and she softly closed the door and returned to her room.

Then the wretched boy looked cautiously up and found her gone, crept out of bed, fastened his door, and threw himself upon his pillow again; tearing his hair, morosely crying

grudgingly loving her, hatefully but impenitently spurning himself, and no less hatefully and unprofitably spurning all the good in the world.

## CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. SPARSIT, lying by to recover the tone of her nerves in Mr Bounderby's retreat, kept such a sharp look-out, night and day, under her Coriolanian eyebrows, that her eyes, like a couple of lighthouses on an iron bound coast, might have warned all prudent mariners from that bold rock, her Roman nose and the dark and craggy region in its neighborhood, but for the placidity of her manner. Although it was hard to believe that her retiring for the night could be anything but a form, so severely wide awake were those classical eyes of hers, and so impossible did it seem that her rigid nose could yield to any relaxing influence, yet her manner of sitting, smoothing her uncomfortable, not to say, gritty, mittens, (they were constructed of a cool fabric like a meat-safe), or of ambling to unknown places of destination with her foot in her cotton stirrup, was so perfectly serene, that most observers would have been constrained to suppose her a dove, embodied by some freak of nature, in the earthly tabernacle of a bird of the hook-beaked order.

She was a most wonderful woman for prowling about the house. How she got from story to story, was a mystery beyond solution. A lady so decorous in herself and so highly connected, was not to be suspected of dropping over the bannisters or sliding down them, yet her extraordinary facility of locomotion, suggested the wild idea. Another noticeable circumstance in Mrs. Sparsit was that she was never hurried. She would shoot with consummate velocity from the roof to the hall, yet would be in full possession of her breath and dignity on the moment of her arrival there. Neither was she ever seen by human vision to go at a great pace.

She took very kindly to Mr. Harthouse, and had some pleasant conversation with him soon after her arrival. She made him her stately curtsy in the garden, one morning before breakfast.

"It appears but yesterday, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, "that I had the honor of receiving you at the Bank, when you were so good as to wish to be made acquainted with Mr. Bounderby's address."

"An occasion, I am sure, not to be forgotten by myself in the course of Ages, said Mr. Harthouse, inclining his head to Mrs. Sparsit with the most indolent of all possible airs.

"We live in a singular world, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit."

"I have had the honor, by a coincidence of which I am proud, to have made a remark, similar in effect, though not so epigrammatically expressed"

"A singular world, I would say, sir," pur-

sued Mrs. Sparsit; after acknowledging the compliment with a drooping of her dark eye brows, not altogether so mild in its expression as her voice was in its dulcet tones; "as regards the intimacies we form at one time, with individuals we were quite ignorant of, at another. I recall, sir, that on that occasion you went so far as to say you were actually apprehensive of Miss Gradgrind."

"Your memory does me more honor than my insignificance deserves. I availed myself of your obliging hints to correct my timidity, and it is unnecessary to add that they were perfectly accurate. Mrs. Sparsit's talent for—in fact, for anything requiring accuracy—with a combination of strength of mind—and Family—is too habitually developed to admit of any question." He was almost falling asleep over this compliment; it took him so long to get through, and his mind wandered so much in the course of its execution.

"You found Miss Gradgrind—I really cannot call her Mrs. Bounderby; it's very absurd of me—as youthful as I described her?" asked Mrs. Sparsit, sweetly.

"You drew her portrait perfectly," said Mr. Harthouse. "Presented her dead image."

"Very engaging, sir?" said Mrs. Sparsit, causing her mittens slowly to revolve over one another.

"Highly so."

"It used to be considered," said Mrs. Sparsit, "that Miss Gradgrind was wanting in animation, but I confess she appears to me considerably and strikingly improved in that respect. Ay, and indeed here is Mr. Bounderby!" cried Mrs. Sparsit, nodding her head a great many times, as if she had been talking and thinking of no one else. "How do you find yourself this morning sir? Pray let us see you cheerful, sir."

Now, these persistent assuagements of his misery, and lightenings of his load, had by this time begun to have the effect of making Mr. Bounderby softer than usual towards Mrs. Sparsit, and harder than usual to most other people from his wife downward. So, when Mrs. Sparsit said, with forced lightness of heart, "You want your breakfast, sir, but I dare say Miss Gradgrind will soon be here to preside at the table," Mr. Bounderby replied, "If I waited to be taken care of by my wife, ma'am, I believe you know pretty well I should wait till Doomsday, so I'll trouble you to take charge of the teapot." Mrs. Sparsit complied, and assumed her old position at table.

This again made the excellent woman vastly sentimental. She was so humble withal, that when Louisa appeared, she rose, protesting she never could think of sitting in that place under existing circumstances, often as she had had the honor of making Mr. Bounderby's breakfast, before Mrs. Gradgrind—she begged pardon, she meant to say, Miss Bounderby—she hoped to be excused, but she really could not get it right yet, though she craved



to become familiar with it by and by—had assumed her present position. It was only (she observed) because Miss Gradgrind happened to be a little late, and Mr. Bounderby's time was so very precious, and she knew it of old to be so essential that he should breakfast to the moment, that she had taken the liberty of complying with his request: long as his will had been a law to her.

"There! stop where you are, ma'am," said Mr. Bounderby, "stop where you are! Mrs. Bounderby will be very glad to be relieved of the trouble, I believe."

"Don't say that, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, almost with severity, "because that is very unkind to Mrs. Bounderby. And to be unkind is not to be you, sir."

"You may set your mind at rest, ma'am. — You can take it very quietly, can't you Loo?" said Mr. Bounderby, in a blustering way to his wife.

"Of course. It is of no moment. Why should it be of any importance to me?"

"Why should it be of any importance to any one, Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am?" said Mr. Bounderby, swelling with a sense of slight. "You attach too much importance to these things, ma'am. By George, you'll be corrected in some of your notions here. You are old fashioned, ma'am. You are behind Tom Gradgrind's children's time."

"What is the matter with you?" asked Louisa, coldly surprised. "What has given you offence?"

"Offence!" repeated Bounderby. "Do you suppose if there was any offence given me, I shouldn't name it, and request to have it corrected? I am a straight forward man, I believe. I don't go beating about for side-winds."

"I suppose no one ever had occasion to think you too diffident, or too delicate," Louisa answered him composedly: "I have never made that objection to you, either as a child or as a woman. I don't understand what you would have."

"Have?" returned Mr. Bounderby. "Nothing. Otherwise, don't you, Loo Bounderby, know thoroughly well that I, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, would have it?"

She looked at him, as he struck the table and made the teacups ring, with a proud color in her face that was a new change, Mr. Harthouse thought. "You are incomprehensible this morning," said Louisa. "Pray take no further trouble to explain yourself. I am not curious to know your meaning. What does it matter?"

Nothing more was said on this theme, and Mr. Harthouse was soon idly gay on indifferent subject. But, from this day, the Sparsit action upon Mr. Bounderby threw Louisa and James Harthouse more together, and strengthened the dangerous alienations from her husband and confidence against him with another, into which she had fallen by degrees so fine, that she could not retrace them if she

tried. But, whether she ever tried or no, lay hidden in her own closed heart.

Mrs. Sparsit was so much affected on this particular occasion, that assisting Mr. Bounderby to his hat after breakfast, and being then alone with him in the hall, she imprinted a chaste kiss upon his hand, murmured "my benefactor!" and retired, overwhelmed with grief. Yet it is an indubitable fact, within the cognizance of this history, that five minutes after he had left the house in the self-same hat, the same descendant of the Scadgerses and connexion-by matrimony of the Powlers, shook her right-hand mitten at his portrait, made a contemptuous grimace at that work of art, and said "Serve you right, you Noodle, and I am glad of it!"

Mr. Bounderby had not been long gone, when Bitzer appeared. Bitzer had come down by train, shrieking and rattling over the long line of arches that bestrode the wild country of past and present coal pits, with an express from Stone Lodge. It was a hasty note to inform Louisa, that Mrs. Gradgrind lay very ill. She had never been well, within her daughter's knowledge; but, she had declined within the last few days, had continued sinking all through the night, and was now as nearly dead, as her limited capacity of being in any state that implied the ghost of an intention to get out of it, allowed.

Accompanied by the lightest of porters, fit colorless servitor at Death's door when Mrs. Gradgrind knocked, Louisa rumbled to Coketown, over the coalpits past and present, and was whirled into its smoky jaws. She dismissed the messenger to his own devices, and rode away to her old home.

She had seldom been there, since her marriage. Her father was usually sifting and sifting at his parliamentary cinder-heap in London (without being observed to turn up many precious articles among the rubbish,) and was still hard at it in the national dust-yard. Her mother had taken it rather as a disturbance than otherwise, to be visited, as she reclined upon her sofa; young people, Louisa felt herself all unfit for; Sissy she had never softened to again, since the night when the stroller's child had raised her eyes to look at Mr. Bounderby's intended wife. She had no inducements to go back, and had rarely gone.

Neither, as she approached her old home now, did any of the best influences of old home descend upon her. The dreams of childhood—its airy fables; its graceful, beautiful, humane, impossible adornments of the world beyond; so good to be believed in once, so good to be remembered when outgrown, for then the least among them rises to the stature of a great charity in the heart, suffering little children to come into the midst of it, and to keep with their pure hands a garden in the stony ways of this world, wherein it were better for all the children of Adam that they should oftener sun themselves, simple and trustful, and not worldly-wise—what had she

to do with these? Remembrances of how she had journeyed to the little that she knew, by the enchanted roads of what she and millions of innocent creatures had hoped and imagined; of how, first coming upon Reason through the tender light of Fancy, she had seen it a beneficent god, deferring to gods as great as itself: not a grim Idol, cruel and cold, with its victims bound hand to foot, and its big dumb shape set up with a sightless stare, never to be moved by anything but so many calculated tons of leverage—what had she to do with these? Her remembrances of home and childhood, were remembrances of the drying up of every spring and fountain in her young heart as it gushed out. The golden waters were not there. They were flowing for the fertilization of the land where grapes are gathered from thorns, and figs from thistles.

She went, with a heavy, hardened kind of sorrow upon her, into the house and into her mother's room. Since the time of her leaving home, Sissy had lived with the rest of the family on equal terms. Sissy was at her mother's side; and Jane, her sister, now ten or twelve years old, was in the room.

There was great trouble before it could be made known to Mrs. Gradgrind that her eldest child was there. She reclined, propped up, from mere habit, on a couch; as nearly in her old usual attitude, as anything so helpless could be kept in. She had positively refused to take to her bed; on the ground that if she did, she would never hear the last of it.

Her feeble voice sounded so far away in her bundle of shawls, and the sound of another voice addressing her seemed to take such a long time in getting down to her ears, that she might have been lying at the bottom of a well. The poor lady was nearer Truth than she ever had been: which had much to do with it.

On being told that Mrs. Bounderby was there, she replied, at cross-purposes, that she had never called him by that name since he married Louisa; that pending her choice of an unobjectionable name, she had called him J.; and that she could not at present depart from that regulation, not being yet provided with a permanent substitute. Louisa had sat by her for some minutes, and had spoken to her often, before she arrived at a clear understanding who it was. She then seemed to come to it all at once.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Gradgrind, "and I hope you are going on satisfactorily to yourself. It was all your father's doing. He set his heart upon it. And he ought to know."

"I want to hear of you, mother; not of myself."

"You want to hear of me, my dear? That's something new, I am sure, when anybody wants to hear of me. Not at all well, Louisa. Very faint and giddy."

"Are you in pain, dear mother?"

"I think there's a pain somewhere in the

room," said Mrs. Gradgrind, "but I couldn't positively say that I have got it."

After this strange speech, she lay silent for some time. Louisa, holding her hand, could feel no pulse; but kissing it, could see a slight thin thread of life in fluttering motion.

"You very seldom see your sister," said Mrs. Gradgrind. "She grows like you. I wish you would look at her. Sissy, bring her here."

She was brought, and stood with her hand in her sister's. Louisa had observed her with her arm round Sissy's neck, and she felt the difference of this approach.

"Do you see the likeness, Louisa?"

"Yes, mother. I should think her like me. But"—

"Eh? Yes, I always say so," Mrs. Gradgrind cried, with unexpected quickness. "And that reminds me. I want to speak to you, my dear. Sissy, my good girl, leave us alone a minute."

Louisa had relinquished the hand; had thought that her sister's was a better and brighter face than hers had ever been; had seen in it, not without a rising feeling of resentment, even in that place and at that time, something of the gentleness of the other face in the room; the sweet face with the trusting eyes, made paler than watching and sympathy made it, by the rich dark hair.

Left alone with her mother, Louisa saw her lying with an awful lull upon her face, like one who was floating away upon some great water, all resistance over, content to be carried down the stream. She put the shadow of a hand to her lips again, and recalled her.

"You were going to speak to me, mother."

"Eh? Yes, to be sure, my dear. You know your father is almost always away now, and therefore I must write to him about it."

"About what, mother? Don't be troubled. About what?"

"You must remember, my dear, that whenever I have said anything, on any subject, I have never heard the last of it; and consequently, that I have long left off saying anything."

"I can hear you, mother." But, it was only by dint of bending down her ear, and at the same time attentively watching the lips as they moved, that she could link such faint and broken sounds into any chain of connexion.

"You learnt a great deal, Louisa, and so did your brother. Ologies of all kinds, from morning to night. If there is any Ology left, of any description, that has not been worn to rags in this house, all I can say is, I hope I shall never hear its name."

"I can hear you, mother, when you have strength to go on." This, to keep her from floating away.

"But there's something—not an Ology at all—that your father has missed, or forgotten, Louisa. I don't know what it is. I have often sat with Sissy near me, and thought about it. I shall never get it's name now. But your father may. It makes me restless.

I want to write to him to find out for God's sake, what it is. Give me a pen, give me a pen."

Even the power of restlessness was gone, except from the poor head, which could just turn from side to side.

She fancied, however, that her request had been complied with, and that the pen she could not have held was in her hand. It matters little what figures of wonderful no-meaning she began to trace upon her wrappings. The hand soon stopped in the midst of them; the light that had always been feeble and dim behind the weak transparency went out; and even Mrs. Gradgrind, emerging from the shadow in which man walketh and disquieteth himself in vain, took upon her the dread solemnity of the sages and patriarchs.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. SPARSIT'S nerves being slow to recover their tone, the worthy woman made a stay of some weeks in duration at Mr. Bounderby's retreat, where, notwithstanding her anchorite turn of mind based upon her becoming consciousness of her altered station, she resigned herself, with noble fortitude, to lodging, as one may say, in clover, and feeding on the fat of the land. During the whole term of this recess from the guardianship of the Bank, Mrs. Sparsit was a pattern of consistency; continuing to take such pity on Mr. Bounderby to his face, as is rarely taken on man, and to call his portrait a Noodle to *its* face, with the greatest acrimony and contempt.

Mr. Bounderby, having got it into his explosive composition that Mrs. Sparsit was a highly superior woman to perceive that he had that general cross upon him in his deserts (for he had not yet settled what it was), and further that Louisa would have objected to her as a frequent visitor if it had comported with his greatness that she should object to anything he chose to do, resolved not to lose sight of Mrs. Sparsit easily. So, when her nerves were strung up to the pitch of again consuming sweetbreads in solitude, he said to her at the dinner-table, on the day before her departure, "I tell you what, ma'am; you shall come down here on a Saturday while the fine weather lasts, and stay till Monday." To which Mrs. Sparsit returned, in effect, though not of the Mahomedan persuasion: "To hear is to obey."

Now, Mrs. Sparsit was not a poetical woman; but she took an idea, in the nature of an allegorical fancy, into her head. Much watching of Louisa, and much consequent observation of her impenetrable demeanor, which keenly whetted and sharpened Mrs. Sparsit's edge, must have given her as it were a lift, in the way of inspiration. She created in her mind a mighty Staircase, with a dark pit of shame and ruin at the bottom; and down these stairs,

from day to day and hour to hour, she saw Louisa coming.

It became the business of Mrs. Sparsit's life, to look up at the staircase, and to watch Louisa coming down. Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, sometimes several steps at one bout, sometimes stopping, never turning back. If she had once turned back, it might have been the death of Mrs. Sparsit in spleen and grief.

She had been descending steadily, to the day, and on the day, when Mr. Bounderby issued the weekly invitation recorded above. Mrs. Sparsit was in good spirits, and inclined to be conversational.

"And pray, sir," said she, "if I may venture to ask a question appertaining to any subject on which you show reserve—which is indeed hardy in me, for I well know you have reason for everything you do—have you received intelligence respecting the robbery?"

"Why, ma'am, no; not yet. Under the circumstances, I didn't expect it yet. Rome wasn't built in a day, ma'am."

"Very true, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, shaking her head.

"Nor yet in a week, ma'am."

"No, indeed, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, with an air of melancholy.

"In a similar manner," said Bounderby, "I can wait, you know. If Romulus and Remus could wait, Josiah Bounderby can wait. They were better off in their youth than I was, however. They had a she wolf for a nurse; I had only a she wolf for a grandmother. She didn't give any milk, ma'am; she gave bruises. She was a regular Alderney at that."

"Ah!" Mrs. Sparsit sighed and shuddered.

"No, ma'am," continued Bounderby, "I have not heard anything more about it. It's in hand, though; and young Tom, who rather sticks to business at present—something new for him; he hadn't the schooling I had—is helping. My injunction is, keep it quiet, and let it seem to blow over. Do what you like under the rose, but don't give a sign of what you're about; or half a hundred of 'em will combine together and get this fellow who has bolted, out of reach for good. Keep it quiet, and the thieves will grow in confidence by little and little, and we shall have 'em."

"Very sagacious indeed, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit. "Very interesting. The old woman you mentioned, sir —"

"The old woman I mentioned, ma'am," said Bounderby, cutting the matter short, as it was nothing to boast about, "is not laid hold of; but, she may take her oath she will be, if that is any satisfaction to her villainous old mind. In the meantime, ma'am, I am of opinion, if you ask me my opinion, that the less she is talked about, the better."

That same evening, Mrs. Sparsit, in her chamber window, resting from her packing operations, looked towards her great staircase and saw Louisa still descending.

She sat by Mr. Harthouse, in an alcove in



the garden, talking very low. He stood leaning over her, as they whispered together, and his face almost touched her hair. "If not quite!" said Mrs. Sparsit, straining her hawk's eyes to the utmost. Mrs. Sparsit was too distant to hear a word of their discourse, or even to know that they were speaking softly, otherwise than from the expression of their figures; but what they said was this:

"You recollect the man, Mr. Harthouse?"

"Oh, perfectly!"

"His face, and his manner, and what he said?"

"Perfectly. And an infinitely dreary person he appeared to me to be. Lengthy and prosy in the extreme. It was very knowing to hold forth, in the humble-virtue school of eloquence; but, I assure you I thought at the time, 'My good fellow, you are over-doing this!'"

"It has been very difficult to me to think ill of that man."

"My dear Louisa—as Tom says." Which he never did say. "You know no good of the fellow?"

"No, certainly."

"Nor of any other such person?"

"How can I," she returned, with more of her first manner on her than he had lately seen, "when I know nothing of them, men or women?"

"My dear Mrs. Bounderby! Then consent to receive the submissive representation of your devoted friend, who knows something of several varieties of his excellent fellow creatures,—for excellent they are," I have no doubt, in spite of such little foibles as always helping themselves to what they can get hold of. This fellow talks. Well; every fellow talks. His professing morality only deserves a moment's consideration, as being a very suspicious circumstance. All sorts of humbugs profess morality, from the House of Commons to the House of Correction, except our people; it really is that exception which makes our people quite reviving. You saw and heard the case. Here was a common man, pulled up extremely short by my esteemed friend Mr. Bounderby—who, as we know, is not possessed of that delicacy which would soften so tight a hand. The common man was injured, exasperated, left the house grumbling, met somebody who proposed to him to go in for some share in this Bank business, went in, put something in his pocket which had nothing in it before, and relieved his mind extremely. Really he would have been an uncommon, instead of a common, man, if he had not availed himself of such an opportunity. Or he may have made it altogether, if he had the cleverness. Equally probable!"

"I almost feel as though it must be bad in me," returned Louisa, after sitting thoughtful awhile, "to be so ready to agree with you, and to be so lightened in my heart by what you say."

"I only say what is reasonable; nothing

worse. I have talked it over with my friend Tom more than once—of course, I remain on terms of perfect confidence with Tom—and he is quite of my opinion, and I am quite of his. Will you walk?"

They strolled away, among the lanes beginning to be indistinct in the twilight—she leaning on his arm—and she little thought how she was going down, down, down, Mrs. Sparsit's staircase.

Night and day, Mrs. Sparsit kept it standing. When Louisa had arrived at the bottom and disappeared in the gulf, it might fall in upon her if it would; but, until then, there it was to be, a Building, before Mrs. Sparsit's eyes. And there Louisa always was, upon it. Always gliding down, down, down.

Mrs. Sparsit saw James Harthouse come and go; she heard of him here and there; she saw the changes of the face he had studied; she, too, remarked to a nicety how and when it clouded, how and when it cleared; she kept her black eyes wide open, with no touch of pity, with no touch of compunction, all absorbed in interest; but, in the interest of seeing her, ever drawing with no hand to stay her, nearer and nearer to the bottom of this new Giants' Staircase.

With all her deference for Mr. Bounderby, as contradistinguished from his portrait, Mrs. Sparsit had not the smallest intention of interrupting the descent. Eager to see it accomplished, and yet patient, she waited for the last fall as for the ripeness and fulness of the harvest of her hopes. Hushed in expectancy, she kept her wary gaze upon the stairs; and seldom so much as darkly shook her right mitten (with her fist in it), at the figure coming down.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

The figure descended the great stairs, steadily, steadily; always verging, like a weight in deep water, to the black gulf at the bottom.

Mr. Gradgrind, apprised of his wife's decease, made an expedition from London, and buried her in a business-like manner. He then returned with promptitude to the national cinder-heap, and resumed his sifting for the odds and ends he wanted, and his throwing of the dust about into the eyes of other people who wanted other odds and ends—in fact, resumed his parliamentary duties.

In the meantime, Mrs. Sparsit kept unwinking watch and ward. Separated from her staircase, all the week, by the length of iron road dividing Coketown from the country house, she yet maintained her cat-like observation of Louisa, through her husband, through her brother, through James Harthouse, through the outsides of letters and packets, through everything animate and inanimate that at any time went near the stairs.—"Your foot on the last step, my lady," said Mrs. Sparsit, apostrophising the descend-

ing figure, with the aid of her threatening mitten, "and all your art shall never blind me."

Art or nature though, the original stock of Louisa's character or the graft of circumstances upon it,—her curious reserve did baffle, while it stimulated, one as sagacious as Mrs. Sparsit. There were times when Mr. James Harthouse was not sure of her. There were times when he could not read the face he had studied so long; and when this lonely girl was a greater mystery to him than any woman of the world with a ring of satellites to help her.

So the time went on; until it happened that Mr. Bounderby was called away from home by business which required his presence elsewhere, for three or four days. It was on a Friday that he intimated this to Mrs. Sparsit at the Bank, adding: "But you'll go down to-morrow, ma'am, all the same. You'll go down just as if I was there. It will make no difference to you."

"Pray, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, reproachfully, "let me beg you not to say that. Your absence will make a vast difference to me, sir, as I think you very well know."

"Well, ma'am, then you must get on in my absence as well as you can," said Bounderby, not displeased.

"Mr. Bounderby," retorted Mrs. Sparsit, "your will is to me a law, sir; otherwise, it might be my inclination to dispute your kind commands, not feeling sure that it will be quite so agreeable to Miss Gradgrind to receive me, as it ever is to your own munificent hospitality. But you shall say no more, sir. I will go, upon your invitation."

"Why, when I invite you to my house, ma'am," said Bounderby, opening his eyes, "I should hope you want no other invitation."

"No indeed, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "I should hope not. Say no more, sir. I would, sir, I could see you gay again!"

"What do you mean, ma'am?" blustered Bounderby.

"Sir," rejoined Mrs. Sparsit, "there was wont to be an elasticity in you which I sadly miss. Be buoyant, sir!"

Mr. Bounderby, under the influence of this difficult adjuration, backed up by her compassionate eye, could only scratch his head in a feeble and ridiculous manner, and afterwards assert himself at a distance, by being heard to bully the small fry of business all the morning.

"Bitzer," said Mrs. Sparsit that afternoon, when her patron was gone on his journey, and the Bank was closing, "present my compliments to young Mr. Thomas, and ask him if he would step up and partake of a lamb chop and walnut ketchup, with a glass of India ale?" Young Mr. Thomas being usually ready for anything in that way, returned a gracious answer, and followed on its heels. "Mr. Thomas," said Mrs. Sparsit, "these plain viands being on table, I thought

you might be tempted." "Thankee, Mrs. Sparsit," said the whelp. And gloomily fell to. "How is Mr. Harthouse, Mr. Tom?" asked Mrs. Sparsit.

"Oh he is all right," said Tom.

"Where may he be at present?" Mrs. Sparsit asked in a light conversational manner, after mentally devoting the whelp to the Furies for being so uncommunicative.

"He is shooting in Yorkshire," said Tom. "Sent Loo a basket half as big as a church, yesterday."

"The kind of gentleman now," said Mrs. Sparsit, sweetly, "whom one might wager to be a good shot!"

"Crack," said Tom.

He had long been a down-looking young fellow, but this characteristic had so increased of late that he never raised his eyes to any face for three seconds together. Mrs. Sparsit consequently had ample means of watching his looks, if she were so inclined.

"Mr. Harthouse is a great favorite of mine," said Mrs. Sparsit, "as indeed he is of most people. May we expect to see him again shortly, Mr. Tom?"

"Why, I expect to see him to-morrow," returned the whelp.

"Good news!" cried Mrs. Sparsit, blandly.

"I have got an appointment with him to meet him in the evening at the station here," said Tom, "and I am going to dine with him afterwards, I believe. He is not coming down to Nickits's for a week or so, being due somewhere else. At least, he says so; but I shouldn't wonder if he was to stop here over Sunday, and stray that way."

"Which reminds me!" said Mrs. Sparsit, "Would you remember a message to your sister, Mr. Tom, if I was to charge you with one?"

"Well! I'll try," returned the reluctant whelp, "if it isn't a long un."

"It is merely my respectful compliments," said Mrs. Sparsit, "and I fear I may not trouble her with my society this week; being still a little nervous, and better perhaps by my poor self."

"Oh! If that's all," observed Tom, "it wouldn't matter much, even if I was to forget it, for Loo's not likely to think of you unless she sees you."

Having paid for his entertainment with this agreeable compliment, he relapsed into a dog-dog silence until there was no more India ale left, when he said, "Well, Mrs. Sparsit, I must be off!" and went off.

Next day, Saturday, Mrs. Sparsit sat at her window all day long: looking at the customers coming in and out, watching the postmen, keeping an eye on the general traffic of the street, revolving many things in her mind, but, above all, keeping her attention on her staircase. The evening came, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and went quietly out: having her reasons for hovering in a furtive way about the station by which a passenger would

arrive from Yorkshire, and for preferring to peep into it round pillars and corners, and out of ladies' waiting-room windows, to appearing in its precincts openly.

Tom was in attendance, and loitered about until the expected train came in. It brought no Mr. Harthouse. Tom waited until the crowd had dispersed, and the bustle was over; and then referred to a posted list of trains, and took counsel with porters. That done, he strolled away idly, stopping in the street and looking up it and down it, and lifting his hat off and putting it on again, and yawning, and stretching himself, and exhibiting all the symptoms of mortal weariness to be expected in one who had still to wait until the next train should come in, an hour and forty minutes hence.

"This is a device to keep him out of the way," said Mrs. Sparsit, starting from the dull office window whence she had watched him last. "Harthouse is with his sister now!"

It was the conception of an inspired moment, and she shot off with her utmost swiftness to work it out. The station for the country house was at the opposite end of the town; the time was short, the road not easy; but she was so quick in pouncing on a disengaged coach, so quick in darting out of it, producing her money, seizing her ticket, and diving into the train, that she was borne along the arches spanning the land of coal-pits past and present, as if she had been caught up in a cloud and whirled away.

All the journey, immovable in the air though never left behind; plain to the dark eyes of her mind, as the electric wires which ruled a colossal strip of music-paper out of the evening sky, were plain to the dark eyes of her body; Mr. Sparsit saw her staircase, with the figure coming down. Very near the bottom now. Upon the brink of the abyss.

An overcast September evening, just at nightfall, saw beneath its drooping eyelid Mrs. Sparsit glide out of her carriage, pass down the wooden steps of the little station into a stony road, cross it into a green lane, and become hidden in a summer growth of leaves and branches. One or two late birds, sleepily chirping in their nests, and a bat heavily crossing and recrossing her, and the reek of her own tread in the thick dust that felt like velvet, were all Mrs. Sparsit heard or saw until she very softly closed a gate.

She went up to the house, keeping within the shrubbery, and went round it, peeping between the leaves at the lower windows. Most of them were open, as they usually were in such warm weather, but there were no lights yet, and all was silent. She tried the garden with no better effect. She thought of the wood, and stole towards it, heedless of long grass and briars; of worms, snails and slugs, and all the creeping things that be. With her dark eyes and her hook nose warily in advance of her, Mrs. Sparsit softly crushed her way through the thick undergrowth, so intent

upon her object that she probably would have done no less, if the wood had been a wood of adders.

Hark!

The smaller birds might have tumbled out of their nests, fascinated by the glittering of Mrs. Sparsit's eyes in the gloom, as she stopped and listened.

Low voices close at hand. His voice, and hers. The appointment was a device to keep the brother away! There they were yonder, by the felled tree.

Bending low among the dewy grass, Mrs. Sparsit advanced closer to them. She drew herself up, and stood behind a tree, like Robinson Crusoe in his ambuscade against the savages; so near to them that at a spring, and that no great one, she could have touched them both. He was there secretly, and had not shown himself at the house. He had come on horseback, and must have passed through the neighboring fields; for his horse was tied to the meadow side of the fence, within a few paces.

"My dearest love," said he, "what could I do? Knowing you were alone, was it possible that I could stay away?"

"You may hang your head, to make yourself the more attractive; I don't know what they see in you when you hold it up," thought Mrs. Sparsit; "but you little think, my dearest love, whose eyes are on you!"

That she hung her head, was certain. She urged him to go away, she commanded him to go away; but she neither turned her face to him, nor raised it. Yet it was remarkable that she sat as still as ever the amiable woman in ambuscade had seen her sit, at any period in her life. Her hands rested in one another, like the hands of a statue; and even her manner of speaking was not hurried.

"My dear child," said Harthouse; Mrs. Sparsit saw with delight that his arm embraced her; "will you not bear with my society for a little while?"

"Not here."

"Where, Louisa?"

"Not here."

"But we have so little time to make so much of, and I have come so far, and am altogether so devoted, and distracted. There never was a slave at once so devoted and ill-used by his mistress. To look for your sunny welcome that has warmed me into life, and to be received in your frozen manner, is heart-rending."

"Am I to say again, that I must be left to myself here?"

"But we must meet, my dear Louisa. Where shall we meet?"

They both started. The listener started guiltily, too; for she thought there was another listener among the trees. It was only rain, beginning to fall fast, in heavy drops.

"Shall I ride up to the house a few minutes hence, innocently supposing that its master is at-home and will be charmed to receive me?"



"No!"

"Your cruel commands are implicitly to be obeyed; though I am the most unfortunate fellow in the world, I believe, to have been insensible to all other women, and to have fallen prostrate at last under the foot of the most beautiful, and the most engaging, and the most imperious. My dearest Louisa, I cannot go myself, or let you go, in this hard abuse of your power."

Mrs. Sparsit saw him detain her with his encircling arm, and heard him then and there, within her (Mrs. Sparsit's) greedy hearing, tell her how he loved her, and how she was the stake for which he ardently desired to play away all that he had in life. The objects he had lately pursued, turned worthless beside her; such success as was almost in his grasp, he flung away from him like the dirt it was, compared with her. Its pursuit, nevertheless, if it kept him near her, or its renunciation if it took him from her, or flight if she shared it, or secrecy if she commanded it, or any fate, or every fate, all was alike to him, so that she was true to him,—the man who had seen how cast away she was, whom she had inspired at their first meeting with an admiration and interest of which he had thought himself incapable, whom she had received into her confidence, who was devoted to her and adored her. All this, and more, in his hurry, and in hers, in the whirl of her own gratified malice, in the dread of being discovered, in the rapidly increasing noise of heavy rain among the leaves, and a thunder-storm rolling up—Mrs. Sparsit received into her mind; set off with such an unavoidable halo of confusion and indistinctness, that when at length he climbed the fence and led his horse away, she was not sure where they were to meet, or when, except that they had said it was to be that night.

But one of them yet remained in the darkness before her; and while she tracked that one, she must be right. "Oh, my dearest love," thought Mrs. Sparsit, "you little think how well attended you are!"

Mrs. Sparsit saw her out of the wood, and saw her enter the house. What to do next? It rained now, in a sheet of water. Mrs. Sparsit's white stockings were of many colors, green predominating; prickly things were in her shoes; caterpillars slung themselves, in hammocks of their own making, from various parts of her dress; rills ran from her bonnet, and her Roman nose. In such condition Mrs. Sparsit stood hidden in the density of the shrubbery, considering what next?

Lo, Louisa coming out of the house! Hastily cloaked and muffled, and stealing away. She elopes! She falls from the lowermost stair, and is swallowed up in the gulf!

Indifferent to the rain, and moving with a quick determined step, she struck into a side-path parallel with the ride. Mrs. Sparsit followed in the shadow of the trees, at but a short distance; for it was not easy to keep a

figure in view going quickly through the umbrageous darkness.

When she stopped to close the side-gate without noise, Mrs. Sparsit stopped. When she went on, Mrs. Sparsit went on. She went by the way Mrs. Sparsit had come, emerged from the green lane, crossed the stony road, and ascended the wooden steps to the railroad. A train for Coketown would come through presently, Mrs. Sparsit knew; so she understood Coketown to be her first place of destination.

In Mrs. Sparsit's limp and streaming state, no extensive precautions were necessary to change her usual appearance; but, she stopped under the lee of the station wall, tumbled her shawl into a new shape, and put it on over her bonnet. So disguised, she had no fear of being recognised when she followed up the railroad steps, and paid her money in the small office. Louisa sat waiting in a corner. Mrs. Sparsit sat waiting in another corner. Both listened to the thunder, which was loud, and to the rain, as it washed off the roof, and pattered on the parapets of the arches. Two or three lamps were rained and blown out; so, both saw the lightning to advantage as it quivered and zig-zaged on the iron tracks.

The seizure of the station with a fit of trembling, gradually deepening to a complaint of the heart, announced the train. Fire and steam, and smoke, and red light; a hiss, a crash, a bell, and a shriek: Louisa put into one carriage, Mrs. Sparsit put into another; the little station a desert speck in the thunder-storm.

Though her teeth chattered in her head from wet and cold, Mrs. Sparsit exulted hugely. The figure had plunged down the precipice, and she felt herself, as it were, attending on the body. Could she, who had been so active in the getting up of the funeral triumph, do less than exult? "She will be at Coketown long before him," thought Mrs. Sparsit, "though his horse is never so good. Where will she wait for him? And where will they go together? Patience. We shall see."

The tremendous rain occasioned infinite confusion, when the train stopped at its destination. Gutters and pipes had burst, drains had overflowed, and streets were under water. In the first instant of alighting, Mrs. Sparsit turned her distracted eyes towards the waiting coaches, which were in great request. "She will get into one," she considered, "and will be away before I can follow in another. At all risks of being run over, I must see the number, and hear the order given to the coachman."

But, Mrs. Sparsit was wrong in her calculation. Louisa got into no coach, and was already gone. The black eyes kept upon the railroad-carriage in which she had travelled, settled upon it a moment too late. The door not being opened after several minutes, Mrs. Sparsit passed it and repassed it, saw nothing, looked in, and found it empty. Wet through

and through; with her feet squelching and squashing in her shoes whenever she moved; with a rash of rain upon her classical visage; with a bonnet like an over-ripe fig; with all her clothes spoiled; with damp impressions of every button, string, and hook-and-eye she wore, printed off upon her highly-connected back; with a stagnant verdure on her general exterior, such as accumulates on an old park fence in a mouldy lane; Mrs. Sparsit had no resource but to burst into tears of bitterness and say, "I have lost her!"

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

The national dustmen, after entertaining one another with a great many noisy little fights among themselves, had dispersed for the present, and Mr. Gradgrind was at home for the vacation.

He sat writing in the room with the deadly-statistical clock, proving something no doubt—probably, in the main, that the Good Samaritan was a Bad Economist. The noise of the rain did not disturb him much; but it attracted his attention sufficiently to make him raise his head sometimes, as if he were rather remonstrating with the elements. When it thundered very loudly, he glanced towards Coketown, having in his mind that some of the tall chimneys might be struck by lightning.

The thunder was rolling into distance, and the rain was pouring down like a deluge, when the door of his room opened. He looked round the lamp upon his table, and saw with amazement, his eldest daughter.

"Louisa!"

"Father, I want to speak to you."

"What is the matter? How strange you look! And good Heaven," said Mr. Gradgrind, wondering more and more, "have you come here exposed to this storm?"

She put her hands to her dress, as if she hardly knew. "Yes." Then she uncovered her head, and letting her cloak and hood fall where they might, stood looking at him: so colorless, so dishevelled, so defiant and despairing, that he was afraid of her.

"What is it? I conjure you, Louisa, tell me what is the matter."

She dropped into a chair before him, and put her cold hand on his arm.

"Father, you have trained me from my cradle."

"Yes, Louisa."

"I curse the hour in which I was born to such a destiny."

He looked at her in doubt and dread, vacantly repeating, "Curse the hour? Curse the hour?"

"How could you give me life, and take from me all the inappreciable things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart? What have you done, O father what have you done, with the

garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here!"

She struck herself with both her hands upon her bosom.

"If it had ever been here, its ashes alone would save me from the void in which my whole life sinks. I did not mean to say this; but, father, you remember the last time we conversed in this room?"

He had been so wholly unprepared for what he heard now, that it was with difficulty he answered, "Yes, Louisa."

"What has risen to my lips now, would have risen to my lips then, if you had given me a moment's help. I don't reproach you, father. What you have never nurtured in me, you have never nurtured in yourself; but O! if you had only done so long ago, or if you had only neglected me, what a much happier creature I should have been this day!"

On hearing this, after all his care, he bowed his head upon his hand and groaned aloud.

"Father, if you had known, when we were last together here, what even I feared while I strove against it—as it has been my task from infancy to strive against every natural prompting that has arisen in my heart; if you had known that there lingered in my breast, sensibilities, affections, weaknesses, capable of being cherished into strength, defying all the calculations ever made by man, and no more known to his arithmetic than his Creator is,—would you have given me to the husband whom I am now sure that I hate?"

He said, "No. No, my poor child."

"Would you have doomed me, at any time, to the frost and blight that have hardened and spoiled me? Would you have robbed me—for no one's enrichment—only for the greater desolation of this world—of the immaterial part of my life, the spring and summer of my belief, my refuge from what is sordid and bad in the real things around me, my school in which I should have learned to be more humble and more trusting with them, and to hope in my little sphere to make them better?"

"O no, no. No, Louisa."

"Yet, father, if I had been stone blind; if I had groped my way by my sense of touch, and had been free, while I knew the shapes and surfaces of things, to exercise my fancy somewhat, in regard to them; I should have been a million times wiser, happier, more loving, more contented, more innocent and human in all good respects, than I am with the eyes I have. Now, hear what I have come to say."

He moved to support her with his arm. She rising as he did so, they stood close together; she with a hand upon his shoulder, looking fixedly in his face.

"With a hunger and thirst upon me, father, which have never been for a moment appeased: with an ardent impulse towards some region where rules, and figures, and definitions were not quite absolute; I have grown up, battling every inch of my way."

"I never knew you were unhappy, my child."  
 "Father, I always knew it. In this strife I have almost repulsed and crushed my better angel into a demon. What I have learned has left me doubting, misbelieving, despising, regretting, what I have not learned; and my dismal resource has been to think that life would soon go by, and that nothing in it could be worth the pain and trouble of a contest."

"And you so young, Louisa!" he said with pity.

"And I so young. In this condition, father—for I show you now, without fear or favor, the ordinary deadened state of my mind as I know it—you proposed my husband to me. I took him. I never made a pretence to him or you that I loved him. I knew, and, father, you knew, and he knew, that I never did. I was not wholly indifferent, for I had a hope of being pleasant and useful to Tom. I made that wild escape into something visionary, and have gradually found out how wild it was. But Tom had been the subject of all the little imaginative tenderness of my life; perhaps he became so because I knew so well how to pity him. It matters little now, except as it may dispose you to think more leniently of his errors."

As her father held her in his arm, she put her other hand upon his other shoulder, and still looking fixedly in his face, went on.

"When I was irrevocably married, there rose up into rebellion against the tie, the old strife, made fiercer by all those causes of disparity which arise out of our two individual natures, and which no general laws shall ever rule or state for me, father, until they shall be able to direct the anatomist where to strike his knife into the secrets of my soul."

"Louisa!" he said, and said imploringly; for he well remembered what had passed between them in their former interview.

"I do not reproach you, father, I make no complaint. I am here with another object."

"What can I do, child? Ask me what you will."

"I am coming to it. Father, chance then threw into my way a new acquaintance; a man such as I had had no experience of; used to the world; light, polished, easy; making no pretences; avowing the low estimate of everything, that I was half afraid to form in secret; conveying to me almost immediately, though I don't know how or by what degrees, that he understood me, and read my thoughts. I could not find that he was worse than I. There seemed to be a near affinity between us. I only wondered it should be worth his while, who cared for nothing else, to care so much for me."

"For you, Louisa!"

Her father might instinctively have loosened his hold, but that he felt her strength departing from her, and saw a wild dilating fire in the eyes steadfastly regarding him.

"I say nothing of his plea for claiming my

confidence. It matters very little how he gained it. Father, he did gain it. What you know of the story of my marriage, he soon knew, just as well."

Her father's face was ashy white, and he held her in both his arms.

"I have done no worse, I have not disgraced you. But if you ask me whether I have loved him, or do love him, I tell you plainly, father, that it may be so. I don't know!"

She took her hands suddenly from his shoulders and pressed them both upon her side; while in her face, not like itself—and in her figure, drawn up, resolute to finish by a last effort what she had to say—the feelings long suppressed broke loose.

"This night, my husband being away, he has been with me, declaring himself my lover. This minute he expects me, for I could release myself of his presence by no other means. I do not know that I am sorry, I do not know that I am ashamed, I do not know that I am degraded in my own esteem. All that I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me. Now, father, you have brought me to this. Save me by some other means!"

He tightened his hold in time to prevent her sinking on the floor, but she cried out in a terrible voice, "I shall die if you hold me! Let me fall upon the ground!" And he laid her down there, and saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying, an insensible heap, at his feet.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Louisa awoke from a torpor, and her eyes languidly opened on her old bed at home, and her old room. It seemed, at first, as if all that had happened since the days when these objects were familiar to her were the shadows of a dream; but gradually as the objects became more real to her sight, the events became more real to her mind.

She could scarcely move her head for pain and heaviness, her eyes were strained and sore, and she was very weak. A curious passive inattention had such possession of her that the presence of her little sister in the room did not attract her notice for some time. Even when their eyes had met, and her sister had approached the bed, Louisa lay for minutes looking at her in silence, and suffering her timidly to hold her passive hand, before she asked:

"When was I brought to this room?"

"Last night, Louisa."

"Who brought me here?"

"Sissy, I believe."

"Why do you believe so?"

"Because I found her here this morning. She didn't come to my bedside to wake me, as she always does, and I went to look for her. She was not in her own room either, and I went looking for her all over the house until I



found her here, taking care of you and cooling your head. Will you see father? Sissy said I was to tell him when you woke."

"What a beaming face you have, Jane!" said Louisa, as her young sister—timidly still—bent down to kiss her.

"Have I? I am very glad you think so. I am sure it must be Sissy's doing."

The arm Louisa had begun to twine about her neck unbent itself. "You can tell father, if you will." Then staying her a moment, she said, "It was you who made my room so cheerful, and gave it this look of welcome?" "Oh no, Louisa, it was done before I came. It was ——"

Louisa turned upon her pillow, and heard no more. When her sister had withdrawn, she turned her head back again, and lay with her face towards the door until it opened and her father entered.

He had a jaded anxious look upon him, and his hand, usually steady, trembled in hers. He sat down at the side of the bed, tenderly asking how she was, and dwelling on the necessity of her keeping very quiet after her agitation and exposure to the weather last night. He spoke in a subdued and troubled voice; very different from his usual dictatorial manner, and was often at a loss for words.

"My dear Louisa. My poor daughter."—He was so much at a loss at that place, that he stopped altogether. He tried again.

"My unfortunate child." The place was so difficult to get over, that he tried again.

"It would be hopeless for me, Louisa, to endeavor to tell you how overwhelmed I have been, and still am, by what broke upon me for the first time last night. The ground on which I stand has ceased to be solid under my feet. The only support on which I leaned, and the strength of which it seemed and still does seem impossible to question, has given way in an instant. I am stunned by these discoveries. I have no selfish meaning in what I say, but I find the shock of what broke upon me last night, to be very heavy indeed."

She could give him no comfort herein. She had suffered the wreck of her whole life upon the rock.

"I will not say, Louisa, that if you had by any happy chance, undeceived me some time ago, it would have been better for us both; better for your peace, and better for mine. For I am sensible that it has not been a part of my system to invite any confidence of that kind. I have proved my—my system to myself, and I have rigidly administered it, and I must bear the responsibility of its failures. I only entreat you to believe, my favorite child, that I have meant to do right."

He said it earnestly, and to do him justice he had. In gauging fathomless depths with his little mean excise-rod, and in staggering over the universe with his rusty stiff-legged compasses, he had meant to do great things. Within the limits of his short tether he had tumbled about, annihilating the flowers of

existence with greater singleness of purpose than many of the blatant personages whose company he kept.

"I am well assured of what you say, father. I know I have been your favorite child; I know you have intended to make me happy. I have never blamed you, and I never shall."

He took her outstretched hand, and retained it in his.

"My dear, I have remained all night at my table, pondering again and again on what has so painfully passed between us. When I consider your character; when I consider that what has been known to me for hours has been concealed by you for years; when I consider under what immediate pressure it has been forced from you at last; I come to the conclusion that I cannot but mistrust myself."

He might have added more than all, when he saw the face now looking at him. He did add it in effect, perhaps, as he softly moved her scattered hair from her forehead with the palm of his hand. Such little actions, slight in another man, were very noticeable in him, and his daughter received them as if they had been words of contrition.

"But," said Mr. Gradgrind, slowly, and with hesitation, as well as with a wretched sense of helplessness, "if I see reason to mistrust myself for the past, Louisa, I should also mistrust myself for the present and the future. To speak unreservedly to you, I do. I am far from feeling convinced now, however differently I might have felt only this time yesterday, that I am fit for the trust you repose in me; that I know how to respond to the appeal you have come home to make to me; that I have the right instinct—supposing it for the moment to be some quality of that nature—how to help you and to set you right, my child."

She had turned upon her pillow, and lay with her face upon her arm, so that he could not see it. All her wildness and passion had subsided; but, though softened, she was not in tears. Her father was changed in nothing so much as in the respect that he would have been glad to see her in tears.

"Some persons hold," he pursued, still hesitating, "that there is a wisdom of the Head, and that there is a wisdom of the Heart. I have not supposed so, but, as I have said, I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the Head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient; how can I venture this morning to say that it is? If that other kind of wisdom should be what I have neglected, and should be the instinct that is wanted, Louisa——"

He suggested it very doubtfully, as if he were half-unwilling to admit it even now. She made him no answer, lying before him on her bed, still half-dressed, much as he had seen her lying on the floor of his room last night.

"Louisa," and his hand rested on her hair again, "I have been absent from here, my

dear; a good deal of late, and though your sister's training has been pursued according to—the system," he appeared to come to that word with great reluctance always, "it has necessarily been modified by daily associations begun, in her case, at a very early age. I ask you—ignorantly and humbly, my daughter—for the better, do you think?"

"Father," she replied, without stirring, "if any harmony has been awakened in her young breast that was mute in mine until it turned to discord, let her thank God for it, and go upon her happier way, taking it as her greatest blessing that she has avoided my way.

"O my child, my child!" he said, in a forlorn manner, "I am an unhappy man to see you thus! What avails it to me that you do not reproach me, if I bitterly reproach myself!" He bent his head and spoke low to her. "Louisa, I have a misgiving that some change may have been slowly working about me by mere love and gratitude; that what the Head had left undone, and could not do, the Heart may have been doing silently. Can it be so?"

She made him no reply.

"I am not too proud to believe it, Louisa. How could I be arrogant, and you before me! Can it be so? Is it so, my dear?"

He looked upon her, once more, lying cast away there, and without another word went out of the room. He had not been long gone when she heard a light tread near the door, and knew that some one stood beside her.

She did not raise her head. A dull anger that she should be seen in her distress, and that the involuntary look she had so resented should come to this fulfilment, smouldered within her like an unwholesome fire. All closely imprisoned forces rend and destroy. The air that would be healthful to the earth, the water that would enrich it, the heat that would ripen it, tear it when caged up. So in her bosom even now. The strongest qualities she possessed, long turned upon themselves, became a heap of obduracy, that rose against a friend.

It was well that soft touch came upon her neck, and that she understood herself to be supposed to have fallen asleep. The sympathetic hand did not claim her resentment. Let it lie there, let it lie.

So it lay there, warming into life a crowd of gentler thoughts, and she lay still. As she softened with the quiet and the consciousness of being so watched, some tears made their way into her eyes. The face stooped closer to her, and she knew that there were tears upon it too, and she the cause of them.

As Louisa feigned to rouse herself, and sat up, Sissy retired, so that she stood placidly at the bed side.

"I hope I have not disturbed you. I have come to ask if you will let me stay with you."

"Why should you stay with me? My sister will miss you. You are everything to her."

"Am I?" returned Sissy, smiling and shak-

ing her head. "I would be something to you' dear Miss Louisa, if I might."

"What?" said Louisa, almost sternly.

"Whatever you want most, if I could be that. At all events I would like to try to be as near it as I can. And however far off that may be, I will never tire of trying. Will you let me?"

"My father sent you to ask me?"

"No indeed," replied Sissy. "He told me that I might come in now, but he sent me away from the room this morning—or at least—" She hesitated and stopped.

"At least, what?" said Louisa, with her searching eyes upon her.

"I thought it best myself that I should be sent away, for I felt very uncertain whether you would like to find me here."

"Have I always hated you so much?"

"I hope not, for I have always been truly attached to you, and deeply wishful that you should know it. But you changed to me a little, shortly before you left home. Not that I wondered at it. You knew so much, and I knew so little; and it was so natural in many ways, going as you were among other friends, that I had nothing to complain of, and was not at all hurt."

Her color rose as she said it modestly and hurriedly. Louisa understood the loving pretence, and her heart smote her.

"May I try?" said Sissy, emboldened to raise her hand to the neck that was insensibly drooping towards her.

Louisa, taking down the hand that would have embraced her in another moment, held it tight in one of hers, and answered:

"First, Sissy, you should know what I am. I am so proud and so hardened, so confused and troubled, so resentful and unjust to every one and to myself, that everything is stormy, dark, and wicked to me. Does not that repel you?"

"No!"

"I am so unhappy, and all that should have made me otherwise is so laid waste, that if I had been bereft of sense to this hour, and instead of being as learned as you think me, had to begin to acquire the simplest truths, I could not want a guide to peace, contentment, honor, all the good of which I am quite devoid, more abjectly than I do. Does not that repel you?"

"No!"

In the innocence of her brave affection, and the trimming up of her old devoted spirit, the once deserted girl shone like a beautiful light upon the darkness of the other.

Louisa raised the hand that it might clasp her neck, and join its fellow there. She fell upon her knees, and clinging to this stroller's child looked up at her almost with veneration.

"Forgive me, pity me, help me! Have compassion on my great need, and let me lay this head of mine upon a loving heart."

"O lay it here!" cried Sissy. "Lay it here, my dear."

Louisa's tears fell like the blessed rain after a long drought. The sullen glare was over, and in every drop there was a germ of hope and promise for the dried-up ground.

### CHAPTER XXX.

Mr. James Harthouse passed a whole night and a day in a state of so much hurry that the World, with its best glass in its eye, would have scarcely recognised him during that insane interval, as the brother Jem of the honorable and jocular member. He was positively agitated. He several times spoke with an emphasis, similar to the vulgar manner. He went in and went out in a most unaccountable way, like a man with an object. He rode like a highwayman. In a word, he was so horribly bored by real existing circumstances, that he forgot to go in for boredom in the manner prescribed by the authorities.

After putting his horse at Coketown through the storm, as if it were a leap, he waited up all night; from time to time ringing his bell with the greatest fury, charging the porter who kept watch with delinquency in withholding letters or messages that could not fail to have been entrusted to him, and demanding restitution on the spot. The dawn coming, the morning coming, and the day coming, and neither message nor letter coming with it, he went down to the country house. There, the report was, Mr. Bounderby away, and Mrs. Bounderby in town. Left for town suddenly last evening. Not even known to be gone until receipt of message, importing that her return was not to be expected for the present.

In these circumstances he had nothing for it but to follow her to town. He went to the house in town. Mrs. Bounderby not there; not even been heard of. He looked in at the Bank. Mr. Bounderby away, and Mrs. Sparsit away. Mrs. Sparsit away? Who could have been reduced to sudden extremity for the company of that griffin!

"Well! I don't know," said Tom, who had his own reasons for being uneasy about it. "She was off somewhere at daybreak this morning. She's always full of mystery; I hate her. So I do that white chap; he's always got his blinking eye upon a fellow."

"Where were you last night, Tom?"

"Where was I last night!" said Tom. "Come! I like that. I was waiting for you, Mr. Harthouse, till it came down as I never saw it come down before. Where was I too! Where were you, you mean?"

"I was prevented from coming—detained."

"Detained!" said Tom. "Two of us were detained. I was detained looking for you till I lost every train but the mail. It would have been a pleasant job to go down by that on such a night, and have to walk home through a pond. I was obliged to sleep in town after all."

"Where?"

"Where? Why, in your bed at Bounderby's."

"Did you see your sister?"

"How the deuce," returned Tom, staring, "could I see my sister when she was fifteen miles off?"

Cursing these quick retorts of the young gentleman to whom he was so true a friend, Mr. Harthouse disembarassed himself of that interview with the smallest conceivable amount of ceremony, and debated for the hundredth time what all this could mean? He made only one thing clear. It was, that whether she was in town or out of town, whether he had been premature with her who was so hard to comprehend, or she had lost courage, or they were discovered, or some mischance or mistake at present incomprehensible had occurred—he must remain to confront his fortune, whatever it was. The hotel where he was known to live when condemned to that region of blackness, was the stake to which he was tied. As to all the rest—What will be, will be.

"So, whether I am waiting for a hostile message, or an assignation, or a penitent remonstrance, or an impromptu wrestle with my friend Bounderby in the Lancashire manner—which would seem as likely as anything else in the present state of affairs—I'll dine," said Mr. James Harthouse. "Bounderby has the advantage in point of weight; and if anything of a British nature is to come off between us, it may as well be in training."

Therefore he rang the bell, and tossing himself negligently on a sofa, ordered "Some dinner at six, with a beefsteak in it," and got through the intervening time as well as he could. That was not particularly well, for he remained in the greatest perplexity, and as the hours went on, and no kind of explanation offered itself, his perplexity augmented at compound interest.

However, he took affairs as coolly as it was in human nature to do, and entertained himself with the facetious idea of the training more than once. "It wouldn't be bad," he yawned at one time, "to give the waiter five shillings and throw him." At another time it occurred to him, "Or a fellow of about thirteen or fourteen stone might be hired by the hour." But these jests did not tell materially on the afternoon or his suspense; and, sooth to say, they both lagged fearfully.

It was impossible, even before dinner, to avoid often walking about in the patterns of the carpet, looking out of the window, listening at the door for footsteps, and occasionally becoming rather hot when they approached that room. But after dinner, when the day turned to twilight, and the twilight turned to night, and still no communication was made to him, it began to be, as he expressed it, "uncommonly like the Holy Office and slow torture." However, still true to his conviction that coolness was the genuine high-breeding, (the only conviction he had,) he seized this



crisis as the opportunity for ordering candles and a newspaper.

He had been trying in vain, for half an hour, to read this newspaper, when the waiter appeared, and said, at once mysteriously and apologetically,

"Beg your pardon sir. You're wanted sir, if you please."

A general recollection that this was the sort of thing the Police said to the swell mob, caused Mr. Harthouse to ask the waiter in return, with bristling indignation, what the Devil he meant by "wanted?"

—"Beg your pardon, sir. Young lady outside, sir, wished to see you."

"Outside? Where?"

"Outside this door, sir."

Giving the waiter to the personage before mentioned, as a blockhead duly qualified for that consignment, Mr. Harthouse hurried into the gallery. A young woman whom he had never seen stood there. Plainly dressed, very quiet, very pretty. As he conducted her into the room and placed a chair for her, he observed by the light of the candles, that she was even prettier than he had at first believed. Her face was innocent and youthful, and its expression remarkably pleasant. She was not afraid of him, or in any way disconcerted; she seemed to have her mind entirely pre-occupied with the occasion of her visit, and to have substituted that consideration for herself.

"I speak to Mr. Harthouse?" she said, when they were alone.

"To Mr. Harthouse." He added in his mind—"And you speak to him with the most confiding eyes I ever saw; and the most earnest voice (though so quiet) I ever heard."

"If I do not understand—and I do not, sir"—said Sissy, "what your honor as a gentleman binds you to, in other matters:" the blood really rose in his face as she began in these words: "I am sure I may rely upon it to keep my visit secret, and what I am going to say. I will rely upon it, if you will tell me I may so far trust you."

"You may, I assure you."

"I am young, as you see; I am alone, as you see. In coming to you, sir, I have no advice or encouragement beyond my own hope."

He thought, "But that is very strong," as he followed the momentary upward glance of her eyes. He thought besides, "This is a very odd beginning. I don't see where we are going."

"Perhaps," said Sissy, "you have already guessed whom I left just now?"

"I have been in the greatest concern and uneasiness during the last four-and-twenty hours (which have appeared as many years)," he returned, "on a lady's account. The hopes I have been encouraged to form that you come from that lady do not deceive me, I trust."

"I left her within an hour."

"So lately! At ——?"

"At her father's."

Mr. Harthouse's face lengthened in spite of his coolness, and his perplexity increased. "Then I certainly," he thought, "do not see where we are going."

"She hurried there last night. She arrived there in great agitation, and was insensible all through the night. I live at her father's, and was with her. You may be sure, sir, you will never see her again as long as you live."

Mr. Harthouse drew a long breath, and, if ever man found himself in the position of not knowing what to say, made the discovery beyond all question that he, James Harthouse, was so circumstanced. The child-like ingenuousness with which his visiter spoke, her modest fearlessness, her truthfulness, which put all artifice aside, her entire forgetfulness of herself in the earnest, quiet, holding to the object with which she had come; all this, together with her reliance on his easily-given promise, which in itself shamed him—presented something in which he was so inexperienced, and against which he knew his usual weapons would fall so powerless; that not a word could he rally to his relief.

At last he said:

"So startling an announcement, so confidently made, and by such lips, is really disconcerting in the last degree. May I be permitted to inquire if you are charged to convey that information to me in those hopeless words by the lady of whom we speak?"

"I have no charge from her."

"The drowning man catches at the straw. With no disrespect for your judgment, and with no doubt of your sincerity, excuse my saying that I cling to the belief that there is yet hope that I am not condemned to perpetual exile from that lady's presence."

"There is not the least hope. The first object of my coming here, sir, is to assure you that you must believe that there is no more hope of your ever speaking with her again than there would be if she had died when she came home last night."

"Must believe? But if I can't—or if I should, by infirmity of nature, be obstinate—and won't—"

"It is still true. There is no hope."

James Harthouse looked at her with an incredulous smile upon his lips, but her mind looked over and beyond him, and the smile was quite thrown away.

He bit his lip, and took a little time for consideration.

"If it should unhappily appear," he said, "after due pains and duty on my part, that I am brought to a position so desolate as this banishment, I shall not become the lady's persecutor. But you said you had no commission from her."

"I have only the commission of my love for her, and her love for me. I have no other trust than that I have been with her since she fled home, and that she has given me

her confidence. I have no further trust than that I know something of her character and her marriage. O, Mr. Harthouse, I think you had that trust too."

He was touched in the cavity where his heart should have been, in that nest of addled eggs, where the birds of heaven would have lived if they had not been whistled away by the simple fervor of this reproach.

"I am not a moral sort of fellow," he said, "and I never make any pretensions to the character of a moral sort of fellow. I am as immoral as need be, I dare say. At the same time, in bringing any distress upon the lady who is the subject of the present conversation, or in unfortunately compromising her in any way; or in committing myself by any expression of sentiments towards her, not perfectly reconcilable with—the domestic hearth; or in taking any advantage of her father's being a machine, or of her brother's being a whelp, or of her husband's being a bear; I beg to be allowed to assure you that I have had no particular evil intentions, but have glided on from one step to another with a smoothness so entirely diabolical that I had not the slightest idea the catalogue was half so long until I began to turn it over. When I end," said Mr. James Harthouse, in conclusion, "that it is in several volumes."

Though he said all this in his frivolous way, the way seemed, for that once, a conscious polishing of but an ugly surface. He was silent for a moment, and then proceeded with a more courtly air, though with traces of vexation and disappointment that would not be polished out:

"After what has been just now represented to me in a manner I find it impossible to doubt—I really know of hardly any other source from which I could have accepted it so readily—I feel bound to say to you in whom the confidence you have mentioned, has been reposed, that I cannot refuse to contemplate the possibility (however unexpected) of my seeing the lady no more. I am solely to blame for the thing having come to this—and—and I cannot say," he added, rather hard up for a general peroration, "that I have any sanguine expectations of ever becoming a moral sort of fellow, or that I have any belief in any moral sort of fellow, anywhere."

Sissy's face sufficiently showed that her appeal to him was not finished.

"You spoke," he resumed, as she raised her eyes to him again, "of your first object. I may assume that there is a second to be mentioned?"

"Yes."

"Will you oblige me by confiding in?"

"Mr. Harthouse," returned Sissy, with a blending of gentleness and steadiness that quite defeated him, and with a perfect confidence in his being bound to do what she required, that held him at a singular disadvantage, "the only reparation that remains with you, is to leave here immediately, and

finally. I am quite sure that you can mitigate in no other way the wrong and harm you have done. I am quite sure that it is the only compensation you have left in your power to make. I do not say that it is much or that it is enough, but it is something, and it is necessary. Therefore, though without any other authority than I have given you, and even without the knowledge of any other person than yourself and myself, I ask you to depart from this place to night under an obligation never to return to it."

If she had asserted any influence over him beyond her simple faith in the truth and right of what she said; if she had concealed the least doubt or irresolution, or had harbored for the best purpose any reserve or pretence; if she had shown or felt the lightest trace of any sensitiveness to his ridicule, or his astonishment, or any remonstrance he might offer, he would have carried it against her at this point. But he could as easily have changed a clear sky by looking at it in surprise as affect her.

"But do you know," he asked, quite at a loss, "the extent of what you ask? You probably are not aware that I am here on a public kind of business, preposterous enough in itself, but which I have gone in for, and sworn by, and am supposed to be devoted to in quite a desperate manner? You probably are not aware of that, but I assure you it's the fact."

It had no effect on Sissy, fact or no fact.

"Besides which," said Mr. Harthouse, taking a turn or two across the room, and biting his nails dubiously, "it's so alarmingly absurd. It would make a man so ridiculous, after going in for these fellows, to back out in such an unaccountable way."

"I am quite sure," repeated Sissy, "that it is the only reparation in your power, sir. I am quite sure, or I would not have come here."

He glanced at her face, and walked about again. "Upon my soul, I don't know what to say. So immensely absurd!"

It fell to his lot, now, to stipulate for secrecy. "If I were to do such a very ridiculous thing," he said, stopping again presently, and leaning against the chimney-piece, "it could only be in the most inviolable confidence."

"I will trust to you, sir," returned Sissy, "and you will trust to me."

His leaning against the chimney piece reminded him of the night with the whelp. It was the self-same chimney-piece, and somehow he felt as if he were the whelp to-night. He could make no way at all.

"I suppose a man never was placed in a more ridiculous position," he said, after looking down, and looking up, and laughing, and frowning, and walking off, and walking back again. "But I see no way out of it. What will be, will be. *This* will be, I suppose. I must take off myself, I imagine—in short, I engage to do it."

Sissy rose. She was not surprised by the

result, but she was happy in it, and her face beamed brightly.

"You will permit me to say," continued Mr. James Harthouse, "that I doubt if any other ambassador, or ambassadress, could have addressed me at the same advantage.—I must not only regard myself as being in a very ridiculous position, but as being vanquished at all points. Will you allow me the privilege of remembering my enemy's name?"

"My name?" said the ambassadress, blushing.

"The only name I could possibly care to know to-night."

"Sissy Jupe."

"Pardon my curiosity at parting. Related to the family?"

"I am only a poor girl," returned Sissy. "I was separated from my father—he was only a stroller—and taken pity on by Mr. Gradgrind. I have lived in the house ever since."

She was gone.

"It wanted this to complete the defeat," said Mr. James Harthouse, sinking, with a resigned air, on the sofa, after standing transfixed a little while, "and now it may be considered perfectly accomplished. Only a poor girl—only a stroller—only James Harthouse floored—only James Harthouse a Great Pyramid of failure."

The Great Pyramid put it into his head to go up the Nile. He took a pen upon the instant, and wrote the following note (in appropriate hieroglyphics) to his brother:

Dear Jack,—All up at Coketown. Bored out of the place, and going in for camels. Affectionately, JEM.

He rang the bell.

"Send my fellow here."

"Gone to bed sir."

"Tell him to get up and pack up."

He wrote two more notes. One, to Mr. Bounderby, announcing his retirement from that part of the country, and showing where he would be found for the next fortnight. The other, similar in effect, to Mr. Gradgrind.

Almost as soon as the ink was dry upon their superscriptions, he had left the tall chimneys of Coketown behind, and was in a railway carriage, tearing and glaring over the dark landscape.

The moral sort of fellows might suppose that Mr. James Harthouse derived some comfortable reflections thereafter from this prompt retreat, as one of his few actions that made any amends for anything, and as a token to himself that he had escaped the climax of a very bad business. But it was not so, at all. A secret sense of having failed and made himself ridiculous; a dread of what other fellows who went in for similar sorts of things, would say at his expense if they knew it, so oppressed him, that what was about the best passage in his life was the one of all others he would not have owned to, and that often made him quite ashamed of himself.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

The indefatigable Mr. Sparsit, with a violent cold upon her, her voice reduced to a whisper, and her stately frame so racked by continual sneezes that it seemed in danger of dismemberment, gave chase to her patron until she found him in the metropolis; and there sweeping in upon him at his hotel in St. James's Street, exploded the combustibles with which she was charged, and blew up. Having executed her mission with infinite relish, this high-minded woman then fainted away on Mr. Bounderby's coat-collar.

Mr. Bounderby's first procedure was to shake Mrs. Sparsit off, and leave her to progress as she might through various stages of suffering on the floor. He next had resource to the administration of potent restoratives, such as screwing the patient's thumbs, sniting her hands, abundantly watering her face, and inserting salt in her mouth. When these attentions had recovered her (which they speedily did), he hustled her into a fast train without any other refreshments, and carried her back to Coketown more dead than alive.

Regarded as a classical ruin, Mrs. Sparsit was an interesting spectacle on her arrival at her journey's end; but considered in any other light, the amount of damage she had by that time sustained was excessive, and impaired her claims to admiration. Utterly heedless of the wear and tear of her clothes and constitution, and adamant to her pathetic sneezes, Mr. Bounderby immediately crammed her into a coach, and bore her off to Stone Lodge.

"Now, Tom Gradgrind," said Bounderby, bursting into his father-in-law's room late at night; "here's a lady here—Mrs. Sparsit—you know Mrs. Sparsit—who has something to make known to you that will strike you dumb."

"You have missed my letter!" exclaimed Mr. Gradgrind, surprised by the apparition.

"Missed your letter, sir!" bawled Bounderby. "The present time is no time for letters. No man shall talk to Josiah Bounderby of Coketown about letters with his mind in the state it's in now."

"Bounderby," said Mr. Gradgrind, in a tone of temperate remonstrance. "I speak of a very special letter I have written to you, in reference to Louisa."

"Tom Gradgrind," replied Bounderby, knocking the flat of his hand several times with great vehemence on the table, "I speak of a very special messenger that has come to me in reference to Louisa. Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am, stand forward."

That unfortunate lady hereupon essaying to offer testimony without any voice, and with painful gestures expressive of an inflamed throat, became so aggravating and underwent so many facial contortions, that Mr. Bounderby, unable to bear it, seized her by the arm and shook her.

"If you can't get it out, ma'am," said Boun-



derby, "leave me to get it out. This is not a time for a lady, however highly connected, to be totally inaudible and seemingly swallowing marbles. Tom Gradgrind, Mrs. Sparsit latterly found herself by accident in a situation to overhear a conversation out of doors between your daughter and your precious gentleman-friend, Mr. James Harthouse."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Gradgrind.

"Ah! Indeed!" cried Bounderby. "And in that conversation——"

"It is not necessary to repeat its tenor, Bounderby. I know what passed."

"You do? Perhaps," said Bounderby, staring with all his might at his so quiet and assuasive father-in-law, "you know where your daughter is at the present time!"

"Undoubtedly. She is here."

"Here?"

"My dear Bounderby, let me beg you to restrain these loud outbreaks, on all accounts. Louisa is here. The moment she could detach herself from that interview with the person of whom you speak, and whom I deeply regret to have been the means of introducing to you, Louisa hurried here, for protection. I myself had not been at home many hours, when I received her—here in this room. She hurried by the train to town, she ran from town to this house through a raging storm, and presented herself before me in a state of distraction. Of course, she has remained here ever since. Let me entreat you, for your own sake and for hers too, to be more quiet."

Mr. Bounderby silently gazed about him for some moments in every direction except Mrs. Sparsit's direction, and then abruptly turning upon the niece of Lady Scadgers, said to that wretched woman:

"Now, ma'am! We shall be happy to hear any little apology you may think proper to offer, for going about the country at express pace, with no other luggage than a Cock and a Bull, ma'am."

"Sir," whispered Mrs. Sparsit, "my nerves are at present too much shaken, and my health is at present too much impaired, in your service, to admit of my doing more than taking refuge in tears."

Which she did.

"Well, ma'am," said Bounderby, "without making any observation to you that may not be made with propriety to a woman of good family, what I have got to add to that, is, that there's something else in which it appears to me you may take refuge, namely, a coach. And the coach in which we came here, being at the door, you'll allow me to hand you down to it and pack you home to the Bank: where the best course for you to pursue, will be to put your feet into the hottest water you can bear, and take a glass of scalding rum and butter after you get into bed." With these words Mr. Bounderby extended his right hand to the weeping lady and escorted her to the conveyance in question, shedding

many plaintive sneezes by the way. He soon returned alone.

"Now, as you showed me in your face, Tom Gradgrind, that you wanted to speak to me," he resumed, "here I am. But I am not in a very agreeable state, I tell you plainly, not relishing this business even as it is, and not considering that I am at any time as dutifully and submissively treated by your daughter as Josiah Bounderby of Coketown ought to be treated by his wife. You have your opinion, I dare say; and I have mine, I know. If you mean to say anything to me to-night, that goes against this candid remark, you had better leave it alone."

Mr. Gradgrind, it will be observed, being much softened, Mr. Bounderby took particular pains to harden himself at all points. It was his amiable nature.

"My dear Bounderby," Mr. Gradgrind began in reply.

"Now, you'll excuse me," said Bounderby, "but I don't want to be too dear. That to start with. When I begin to be dear to a man, I generally find that his intention is to come over me. I am not speaking to you politely; but, as you are aware, I am *not* polite. If you like politeness, you know where to get it. You have your gentlemen friends you know, and they'll serve you with as much of the article as you want. I don't keep it myself."

"Bounderby," urged Mr. Gradgrind, "we are all liable to mistakes——"

"I thought you couldn't make 'em," interrupted Bounderby.

"Perhaps I thought so. But, I say we are all liable to mistakes; and I should feel sensible of your delicacy, and really grateful for it, if you would spare me these references to Harthouse. I shall not associate him in our conversation with your intimacy and encouragement; pray do not persist in connecting him with mine."

"I never mentioned his name!" said Bounderby.

"Well, well!" returned Mr. Gradgrind, with a patient, even a submissive, air. And he sat for a little while pondering. "Bounderby, I see reason to doubt whether we have ever quite understood Louisa."

"Who do you mean by We?"

"Let me say, I, then," he returned, in answer to the coarsely blurted question; "I doubt whether I have understood Louisa. I doubt whether I have been quite right in the manner of her education."

"There you hit it," returned Bounderby. "There I agree with you. You have found it out at last, have you? Education! I'll tell you what education is—To be tumbled out of doors, neck and crop, and put upon the shortest allowance of everything except blows. That's what I call education."

"I think your good sense will perceive," Mr. Gradgrind remonstrated in all humility, "that whatever the merits of such a system

may be, it would be difficult of general application to girls."

"I don't see it at all, sir," returned the obstinate Bounderby.

"Well," sighed Mr. Gradgrind, "we will not enter into the question. I assure you I have no desire to be controversial. I seek to repair what is amiss, if I possibly can, and I hope you will assist me in a good spirit, Bounderby, for I have been very much distressed."

"I don't understand you, yet," said Bounderby, with determined obstinacy, "and therefore I won't make any promises."

"In the course of a few hours, my dear Bounderby," Mr. Gradgrind proceeded, in the same depressed and propitiatory manner, "I appear to myself to have become better informed as to Louisa's character than in all previous years. The enlightenment has been painfully forced upon me, and the discovery is not mine. I think there are—Bounderby, you will be surprised to hear me say this—I think there are imaginative qualities in Louisa, which—which have been hardly dealt with, and—and a little perverted. And—and I would suggest to you, that—that if you would kindly meet me in a timely endeavor to leave her to her better nature for a while—and to encourage it to develop itself by tenderness and consideration—it—it would be better for the happiness of all of us. Louisa," said Mr. Gradgrind, shading his face with his hand, "has always been my favorite child."

The blustrous Bounderby crimsoned and swelled to such an extent on hearing these words, that he seemed to be, and probably was, on the brink of a fit. With his very ears a bright purple shot with crimson, he put up his indignation, however, and said:

"You'd like to keep her here for a time?"

"I—I had intended to recommend, my dear Bounderby, that you should allow Louisa to remain here on a visit, and be attended by Nissy (I mean of course Cecilia Jupe), who understands her, and in whom she trusts."

"I gather from all this, Tom Gradgrind," said Bounderby, standing up with his hands in his pockets, "that you are of opinion there's what people call some incompatibility between Loo Bounderby and myself."

"I fear there is at present a general incompatibility between Louisa, and—and—and almost all the relations in which I have placed her," was her father's sorrowful reply.

"Now look you here, Tom Gradgrind," said Bounderby the flushed, confronting him with his legs wide apart, his hands deeper in his pockets, his hair like a hay field wherein his windy anger was boisterous. "You have said your say, I am going to say mine. I am a Coketown man. I am Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. I know the bricks of this town, and I know the works of this town, and I know the chimneys of this town, and I know the smoke of this town, and I know the Hands of this town. I know 'em all pretty well.—

They're real. When a man tells me anything about imaginative qualities, I always tell that man, whoever he is, that I know what he means. He means turtle-soup and venison, with a gold spoon, and that he wants to be set up with a coach and six. That's what your daughter wants. Since you are of opinion that she ought to have what she wants, I recommend you to provide it for her. Because, Tom Gradgrind, she will never have it from me."

"Bounderby," said Mr. Gradgrind, "I hoped, after my entreaty, you would have taken a different tone."

"Just wait a bit," retorted Bounderby, "you have said your say, I believe. I heard you out; hear me out if you please. Don't make yourself a spectacle of unfairness as well as inconsistency, because, although I am sorry to see Tom Gradgrind reduced to his present position, I should be doubly sorry to see him brought so low as that. Now, there's an incompatibility of some sort or another, I am given to understand by you, between your daughter and me. I'll give you to understand, in reply to that, that there unquestionably is an incompatibility of the first magnitude to be summed up in this—that your daughter don't properly know her husband's merits, and is not impressed with such a sense as would become her, by George! of the honor of his alliance. That's plain speaking, I hope."

"Bounderby," urged Mr. Gradgrind, "this is unreasonable."

"Is it?" said Bounderby. "I am glad to hear you say so. Because when Tom Gradgrind, with his new lights, tells me that what I say is unreasonable, I am convinced at once that it must be devilish sensible. With your permission I am going on. You know my origin, and you know that for a good many years of my life I didn't want a shoeing-horn in consequence of not having a shoe. Yet you may believe or not, as you think proper, that there are ladies—born ladies—belonging to families—families!—who next to worship the ground I walk on."

He discharged this, like a Rocket, at his father-in-law's head.

"Whereas your daughter," proceeded Bounderby, "is far from being a born lady. That you know, yourself. Not that I care a pinch of candle-snuff about such things, for you are very well aware I don't; but that such is the fact, and you, Tom Gradgrind, can't change it. Why do I say this?"

"Not, I fear," observed Mr. Gradgrind, in a low voice, "to spare me."

"Hear me out," said Bounderby, "and refrain from cutting in till your turn comes round. I say this, because highly connected females have been astonished to see the way in which your daughter has conducted herself, and to witness her insensibility. They have wondered how I have suffered it. And I wonder myself now, and I won't suffer it."

"Bounderby," returned Mr. Gradgrind,

rising, "the less we say to-night the better, I think."

"On the contrary, Tom Gradgrind, the more we say to-night, the better, I think.—That is,"—the consideration checked him—"till I have said all I mean to say, and then I don't care how soon we stop. I come to a question that may shorten the business.—What do you mean by the proposal you made just now?"

"What do I mean, Bounderby?"

"By your visiting proposition," said Bounderby, with an inflexible jerk of the hay field.

"I mean that I hope you may be induced to arrange, in a friendly manner, for allowing Louisa a period of repose and reflection here, which may tend to a gradual alteration for the better in many respects.

"To a softening down of your ideas of the incompatibility," said Bounderby.

"If you put it in those terms."

"What made you think of this?" said Bounderby.

"I have already said. I fear Louisa has not been understood. Is it asking too much, Bounderby, that you, so far her elder, should aid in trying to set her right? You have accepted a great charge of her; you took her for better for worse."

Mr. Bounderby may have been annoyed by the repetition of his own words to Stephen Blackpool, but he cut the quotation short with an angry start.

"Come!" he said, "I don't want to be told about that. I know what I took her for, as well as you. Never you mind what I took her for; that's my look out."

"I was merely going on to remark, Bounderby, that we may all be more or less in the wrong, not even excepting you; and that some yielding consideration on your part, remembering the trust you have accepted, may not only be an act of true kindness, but perhaps a debt incurred towards Louisa."

"I think differently," blustered Bounderby, "I am going to finish this business according to my own opinions. I don't want to make a quarrel of it with you, Tom Gradgrind. To tell you the truth, I don't think it would be worthy of my reputation to quarrel on such a poor subject. Your gentleman friend, he may take himself off, wherever he likes best. If he falls in my way, I shall tell him my mind; if he don't fall in my way, I shan't, for it won't be worth my while to do it. As to your daughter, whom I made Loo Bounderby, and might have done better by leaving Loo Gradgrind, if she don't come home to-morrow, by twelve o'clock at noon, I shall understand that she prefers to stay away, and I shall send her wearing apparel and so forth over here, and you'll take charge of her for the future. What I shall say to people in general, of the incompatibility that led to my so laying down the law, will be this. I am Josiah Bounderby, and I had my bringing-up. She's the daughter of Tom Gradgrind, and she had

her bringing-up; and the two horses wouldn't pull together! I am pretty well known to be rather an uncommon man, I believe; and most people will understand fast enough that it must be a woman rather out of the common also, who, in the long run, would come up to my mark."

"Let me seriously entreat you to re-consider this, Bounderby," urged Mr. Gradgrind, "before you commit yourself to a decision."

"I always come to a decision," said Bounderby, tossing his hat on, "and whatever I do, I do at once. I should be surprised if Tom Gradgrind's addressing such a remark to Josiah Bounderby, of Coketown, knowing what he knows of him, if I could be surprised by anything Tom Gradgrind did, after his making himself a party to sentimental humbug. I have given you my decision, and I have got no more to say. Good night!"

So, Mr. Bounderby went home to his town-house to bed. At five minutes past twelve o'clock next day, he directed Mrs. Bounderby's property to be carefully packed up and sent to Tom Gradgrind's; advertised Nickit's retreat for sale by private contract; and resumed a bachelor's life.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

The robbery at the bank had not languished before, and did not cease to occupy a front place in the attention of the principal of that establishment now. In trustful proof of his promptitude and activity, as a remarkable man, and a self-made man, and a commercial wonder, more admirable than Venus who had risen out of the mud instead of the sea, he liked to show how little his domestic affairs abated his business ardor. Consequently, in the first few weeks of his resumed bachelorhood, he even advanced upon his usual display of lustre, and every day made such a rout in renewing his investigations into the robbery, that the professional persons who had it in hand almost wished it had never been committed.

They were at fault too, and off the scent. Although they had been so quiet since the first outbreak of the matter, that most people really did suppose it to have been abandoned as hopeless, nothing new occurred. No implicated man or woman took untimely courage or made a self-betraying step. More remarkable yet, Stephen Blackpool was not found, and the mysterious old woman remained a mystery.

Things having come to this pass, and showing no latent signs of stirring beyond it, the upshot of Mr. Bounderby's investigations was, that he resolved to hazard a bold burst. He drew up a placard, offering Twenty Pounds reward for the apprehension of Stephen Blackpool, suspected of complicity in the robbery of the Coketown Bank on such a night: he described the said Stephen Blackpool by dress, complexion, estimated



height, and manner, as minutely as he could; he had recited how he had left the town, and in what direction he had last been seen going; he had the whole printed in great black letters on a staring broadsheet; and caused the walls to be posted with it in the dead of the night, so that it should strike upon the sight of the whole population at one blow.

The factory-bells had need to ring their loudest that morning to disperse the groups of workers who stood in the tardy daybreak, collected round the placards, devouring them with eagereyes. Not the least eager of the eyes assembled were the eyes of those who could not read. These people, as they listened to the friendly voice that read aloud—there was always some such ready to help them—started at the characters which meant so much with a vague awe and respect that would have been half ludicrous if such a picture of a Country as a suicidal Idiot with its sword of state at its own heart could ever be otherwise than wholly shocking. Many ears and eyes were busy with a vision of the matter of these placards, among turning spindles, rattling looms and whirling wheels, for hours afterwards; and when the Hands cleared out again into the streets, there were as many readers as before.

Slackbridge, the delegate, had to address his audience too that night, and Slackbridge had obtained a clean bill from the printer, and had brought it in his pocket. Oh my friends and fellow countrymen, the down-trodden operatives of Coketown, oh my fellow brothers and fellow workmen and fellow citizens and fellow men, what a stir was there when Slackbridge unfolded what he called "that damning document," and held it up to the gaze, and for the execration, of the working-man community! "Oh, my fellow men, behold of what a traitor in the camp of those great spirits who are enrolled upon the holy scroll of Justice and of Union, is appropriately capable! Oh my prostrate friends, with the galling yoke of tyrants on your necks and the iron foot of despotism treading down your fallen forms into the dust of the earth, upon which right glad would your oppressors be to see you creeping on your bellies all the days of your lives, like the serpent in the garden—oh my brothers, and shall I as a man not add my sisters too, what do you say, *now*, of Stephen Blackpool, with a slight stoop in his shoulders and about five foot seven in height, as set forth in this degrading and disgusting document, this blighting bill, this pernicious placard, this abominable advertisement; and with what majesty of denouncement, will you crush the viper who would bring this stain and shame upon the Godlike race that happily has cast him out for ever! Yes, my compatriots, happily cast him out and sent him forth! For you remember how he stood here before you on this platform; you remember how, face to face and foot to foot, I pursued him through all his intricate windings; you remember how

he sneaked, and shunked, and sidled, and splitted straws, until with not an inch of ground to which to cling, I hurled him out from amongst us: an object for the undying finger of scorn to point at, and for the avenging fire of every free and thinking mind, to scorch and slur! And now, my friends, my laboring friends, for I rejoice and triumph in that stigma, my friends; whose hard but honest beds are made in toi, and whose scanty but independent pots are boiled in hardship; and, now I say, my friends, what appellation has that dastard craven taken to himself, when, with the mask torn from his features, he stands before us in all his native deformity, a What? a thief! a plunderer! a proscribed fugitive, with a price upon his head, a fester and a wound upon the noble character of the Coketown operative! Therefore, my band of brothers in a sacred bond, to which your children and your children's children yet unborn have set their infant hands and seals, I propose to you on the part of the United Aggregate Tribunal, ever watchful for your welfare, ever zealous for your benefit, that this meeting does Resolve: That Stephen Blackpool, weaver, referred to in this placard, having been already solemnly disowned by the community of Coketown Hands, the same are free from the shame of his misdeeds, and cannot as a class be reproached with his dishonest actions!"

Thus Slackbridge; gnashing and perspiring after a prodigious sort. A few stern voices called out "No!" and a score or two hailed with assenting cries of "Hear, hear!" the caution from one man, "Slackbridge, y'or ever hetter int; y'or a goen too fast!" But these were pigmies against an army; the general assemblage subscribed to the gospel according to Slackbridge, and gave three cheers for him, as he sat demonstratively panting at them.

These men and women were vet in the streets, passing quietly to their homes, when Sissy, who had been called away from Louisa some minutes before, returned.

"Who is it?" asked Louisa.

"It is Mr. Bounderby," said Sissy, timid of the name, "and your brother Mr. Tom, and a young woman who says her name is Rachael, and that you know her."

"What do they want, Sissy dear?"

"They want to see you. Rachael has been crying and seems angry."

"Father," said Louisa, for he was present, "I cannot refuse to see them, for a reason you will soon understand. Shall they come in here?"

As he answered in the affirmative, Sissy went away to bring them. She reappeared with them directly. Tom was last, and remained standing in the obscurest part of the room, near the door.

"Mrs. Bounderby," said her husband, entering with a cool nod, "I don't disturb you, I hope. This is an unreasonable hour, but here is a young woman who has been making state-

ments which render my visit necessary. Tom Gradgrind, as your son, young Tom, refuses for some obstinate reason or other, to say anything at all about those statements, good or bad, I am obliged to confront her with your daughter."

"You have seen me once before, young lady," said Rachael, standing in front of Louisa.

Tom coughed.

"You have seen me, young lady," repeated Rachael, as she did not answer, "once before." Tom coughed again.

"I have."

Rachael cast her eyes proudly towards Mr. Bounderby, and said, "Will you make it known where, and who was there?"

"I went to the house where Stephen Blackpool lodged, on the night of his discharge from his work, and I saw you there. He was there too; and an old woman who did not speak, and whom I could scarcely see, stood in a dark corner. My brother went with me."

"Why couldn't you say so, young Tom?" demanded Bounderby.

"I promised my sister I wouldn't," which Louisa hastily confirmed. "And, besides," said the whelp bitterly, "she tells her own story so precious well—and so full—that what business had I to take it out of her mouth!"

"Say, young lady, if you please," pursued Rachael, "why, in an evil hour, you ever came to Stephen's that night."

"I felt compassion for him," said Louisa, her color deepening, "and I wished to know what he was going to do, and wished to offer him assistance."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bounderby.—"Much flattered and obliged."

"Did you offer him," asked Rachael, "a bank note?"

"Yes; but he refused it, and would only take two pounds in gold."

Rachael cast her eyes towards Mr. Bounderby again.

"Oh certainly!" said Bounderby. "If you put the question whether your ridiculous and improbable account was true or not, I am bound to say it is confirmed."

"Young lady," said Rachael. "Stephen Blackpool is now named as a robber in public print all over this town and everywhere else! There have been a meeting to-night where he have been spoken of in the same shameful way. Stephen! The honestest lad, the truest lad, the best!" Her indignation failed her, and she broke off, sobbing.

"I am very, very sorry," said Louisa.

"O young lady, young lady," returned Rachael, "I hope you may be, but I don't know! I can't say what you may have done! The like of you don't feel for us, don't care for us, don't belong to us. I am not sure why you may have come that night. I can't tell but what you may have come with some aim of your own, not mindin' to what trouble you brought such as the poor lad. I said then,

Bless you for coming, and I said it of my heart, you seemed to take so pitifully to him, but I don't know now, I don't know!"

Louisa could not reproach her for her unjust suspicions; she was so faithful to her idea of the man, and so unhappy.

"And when I think," said Rachael through her sobs, "that the poor lad was so grateful, thinkin' you so good to him—when I mind that he put his hand over his hard worked face to hide the tears that you brought up there—O I hope you may be sorry, and have no bad cause to be it, but I don't know, I don't know!"

"You're a pretty article," growled the whelp, moving uneasily in his dark corner, "to come here with these precious imputations! You ought to be bundled out for not knowing how to behave yourself, and you would be by rights."

She said nothing in reply, and her low weeping was the only sound that was heard, until Mr. Bounderby spoke.

"Come!" said he, "you know what you have engaged to do. You had better give your mind to that; not this."

"Deed, I am loath," returned Rachael, drying her eyes, "that any here should see me weep; but I won't be seen so again. Young lady, when I had read what's put in print of Stephen—and what has just as much truth in it as if it had been put in print of you, and no more—I went straight to the Bank to say I knew where Stephen was, and to give a sure and certain promise that he should be here in two days. I couldn't meet with Mr. Bounderby then, and your brother sent me away, and I tried to find you, but you was not to be found, and I went back to work. Soon as I came out of the Mill to-night I hastened to hear what was said of Stephen—for I know with pride he will come back to shame it!—and then I went again to see Mr. Bounderby, and I found him, and I told him every word I knew, and he believed no word I said, and brought me here."

"So far that's true enough," assented Mr. Bounderby, with his hands in his pockets and his hat on. "But I have known you people before to-day, you'll observe, and I know you never die for want of talking. Now, I recommend you not so much to mind talking just now, as doing. You have undertaken to do something; all I remark upon that at present is, do it!"

"I have written to Stephen by the post that went out this afternoon, as I have written to him once before since he went away," said Rachael; "and he will be here at furthest, in two days."

"Then I'll tell you something. You are not aware, perhaps," retorted Mr. Bounderby, "that you yourself have been looked after now and then, not being considered quite free from suspicion in this business, on account of most people being judged according to the company they keep. The post-office hasn't been forgotten either. What I'll tell you is, that no

letter to Stephen Blackpool has ever got into it. Therefore, what has become of yours, I leave you to guess. Perhaps you're mistaken, and never wrote any."

"He hadn't been gone from here, young lady," said Rachael, turning appealingly to Louisa, "as much as a week, when he sent me the only letter I have had, saying that he was forced to seek work in another name."

"Oh, by George!" cried Bounderby, with a whistle, "he changes his name, does he? That's rather unlucky, too, for such an immaculate lad. It's considered a little suspicious in Courts of Justice, I believe, when an Innocent happens to have many names."

"What," said Rachael, with the tears in her eyes again,—"what, young lady, in the name of Mercy, was left the poor lad to do! The masters against him on one hand, the men against him on the other, he only wanting to work hard in peace, and do what he felt right. Can a man have no soul of his own, no mind of his own? Must he go wrong all through w<sup>i</sup>th this side, or must he go wrong all through w<sup>i</sup>th that, or else be hunted like a hare?"

"Indeed, indeed, I pity him from my heart," returned Louisa; "and I hope that he will clear himself."

"You need have no fear of it, young lady. He is sure!"

"All the surer, I suppose," said Mr. Bounderby, "for your refusing to tell where he is? Eh lass?"

"He shall not, through any act of mine, come back w<sup>i</sup>th the unmerited reproach of being brought back. He shall come back of his own accord to clear himself, and put all those that have injured his good character, and he not here for its defence, to shame. I have told him what has been done against him," said Rachael, throwing off all distrust as a rock throws off the sea, "and he will be here, at furthest, in two days."

"Notwithstanding which," added Mr. Bounderby, "if he can be laid hold of sooner, he shall have an earlier opportunity of clearing himself. As to you, I have nothing against you; what you came and told me turns out to be true, and I have given you the means of proving it to be true, and there's an end of it. I wish you Good-night all! I must be off to look a little further into this."

Tom came out of his corner when Mr. Bounderby moved, moved with him, kept close to him, and went away with him. The only parting salutation of which he delivered himself was a sulky "Good night, father!" With that brief speech, and a scowl at his sister, he left the house.

Since his sheet anchor had come home, Mr. Gradgrind had been sparing of speech. He still sat silent, when Louisa mildly said:

"Rachael, you will not distrust me one day, when you know me better."

"It goes against me," Rachael answered, in a gentle manner, "to mistrust any one; but when I am so mistrusted—when we all are—

I cannot keep such things quite out of my mind. I ask your pardon for having done you an injury. I don't think what I said, now.—Yet I might come to think it again, w<sup>i</sup>th the poor lad so belied."

"Did you tell him in your letter," inquired Sissy, "that suspicion seemed to have fallen upon him, because he had been seen about the bank at night? He would then know what he would have to explain on coming back, and would be ready."

"Yes dear," she returned; "but I can't guess what can have ever taken him there. He never used to go there. It was never in his way. His way was the same as mine, and not near it."

Sissy had already been at her side asking her where she lived, and whether she might come to-morrow night, to inquire if there were news.

"I doubt," said Rachael, "if he can be here till next day."

"Then I will come next night too," said Sissy."

When Rachael, assenting to this, was gone, Mr. Gradgrind lifted up his head, and said to his daughter:

"Louisa, my dear, I have never, that I know of, seen this man. Do you believe him to be implicated?"

"I think I have believed it, father, though with great difficulty. I do not believe it now."

"That is to say, you once persuaded yourself to believe it, from knowing him to be suspected. His appearance and manner; are they so honest?"

"Very honest."

"And her confidence not to be shaken. I ask myself, then," said Mr. Gradgrind, musing, "does the real culprit know of these accusations? Where is he? Who is he?"

His hair had latterly begun to change its color. As he leaned upon his hand again, looking gray and old, Louisa, with a face of fear and pity, hurriedly went over to him and sat close at his side. Her eyes by accident met Sissy's at this moment. Sissy flushed and started, and Louisa put her finger on her lip.

Next night when Sissy returned home and told Louisa that Stephen was not come, she told it in a whisper. Next night again, when she came home with the same account, and added that he had not been heard of, she spoke in the same low frightened tone. From the moment of that interchange of looks, they never uttered his name, or any reference to him aloud; nor ever pursued the subject of the robbery when Mr. Gradgrind spoke of it.

The two appointed days ran out, three days and nights ran out, and Stephen Blackpool was not come, and remained unheard of. On the fourth day, Rachael, with unabated confidence, but considering her despatch to have miscarried, went up to the Bank, and showed her letter from him with his address, at a working colony, one of many, not upon the main road, some sixty miles away. Mes-



sengers were sent to that place, and the whole town looked for Stephen to be brought in next day.

All this time the whelp moved about with Mr. Bounderby, like his shadow, assisting in all the proceedings. He was greatly excited, horribly fered, bit his nails down to the quick, spoke in a hard rattling voice, and with lips that were black and burnt up. At the time when the suspected man was looked for, the whelp was at the station, offering to wager that he had made off before the arrival of those who were sent in quest of him, and that he would not appear.

The whelp was right. The messengers returned alone. Rachael's letter had gone, Rachael's letter had been delivered, Stephen Blackpool had decamped in that same hour; and no soul knew more of him. The only doubt in Coketown was, whether Rachael had written in good faith, believing that he really would come back; or warning him to fly. On this point opinion was divided.

Six days, seven, far on into another week. The wretched whelp plucked up a ghastly courage, and began to grow defiant. "*Was* the suspected fellow the thief? A pretty question! If not, where was the man, and why did he not come back?"

Where was the man, and why did he not come back? In the dead of night the echoes of his own words, which had rolled Heaven knows how far away in the daytime, came back instead, and abided by him until morning.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

DAY and night again, day and night again. No Stephen Blackpool. Where was the man, and why did he not come back?

Every night Sissy went to Rachael's lodging, and sat with her in her small neat room. All day, Rachael toiled as such people must toil, whatever their anxieties. The smoke-serpents were indifferent who was lost or found, who was bad or good; the melancholy mad elephants, like the Hard Fact men, abated nothing of their set routine, whatever happened. Day and night again, day and night again, the monotony was unshaken. Even Stephen Blackpool's disappearance was falling into the general way, and becoming as monotonous a wonder as any piece of machinery in Coketown.

"I misdoubt," said Rachael, "if there is as many as twenty left in all this place who have any trust in the poor dear lad now."

She said it to Sissy as they sat in her lodging, lighted only by the lamp at the street corner. Sissy had come there when it was already dark, to wait for her return from work; and they had since sat at the window where Rachael had found her, wanting no brighter light to shine on their sorrowful talk.

"If it hadn't been mercifully brought about that I was to have you to speak to," pursued

Rachael, "times are when I think my mind would not have kept right. But I get hope and strength through you, and you believe that though appearances may rise against him, he will be proved clear, living or dead."

"I do believe so," returned Sissy, "with my whole heart. I feel so certain, Rachael, that the confidence you hold in yours against all discouragement, is not like to be wrong, that I have no more doubt of him than if I had known him through as many years of trial as you have."

"And I, my dear," said Rachael, with a tremble in her voice, "have known him through them all, to be, according to his quiet ways, so faithful to everything honest and good, that if he was never to be heard of more, and I was to live to be a hundred years old I would say with my last breath, God knows my heart, I have never once left trusting Stephen Blackpool!"

"We all believe, up at the Lodge, Rachael, that he will be freed from suspicion, sooner or later."

"The better I know it to be so believed there, my dear," said Rachael, "and the kinder I feel it that you come away from there purposely to comfort me, and keep me company, and be seen wi' me when I am not yet free from all suspicion myself, the more grieved I am that I should ever have spoken those mistrusting words to the young lady. And yet—"

"You don't mistrust her now, Rachael?"

"Now that you have brought us more together, no; not her. But I can't at all times keep out of my mind—"

Her voice so sunk into a low and slow communing with herself, that Sissy, sitting by her side, was obliged to listen with attention.

"I can't at all times keep out of my mind, mistrustings of some one. I can't think who 'tis, I can't think how or why it may be done, but I mistrust that some one has put Stephen out of the way. I mistrust that by his coming back of his own accord, and showing himself innocent before them all, some one would be confounded, who—to prevent that—has stopped him and put him out of the way."

"That is a dreadful thought," said Sissy, turning pale.

"It is a dreadful thought to think he may be murdered."

Sissy shuddered, and turned paler yet.

"When it makes its way into my mind, dear," said Rachael, "and it will come sometimes, though I do all I can to keep it out wi' counting on to high numbers as I work, and I saying over and over again pieces that I knew when I were a child, I fall into such a wild hot hurry, that, however tired I am, I want to walk fast, miles and miles. I must get the better of this before my bed time. I'll walk home wi' you now."

"He might fall ill upon the journey," said Sissy, faintly offering a worn-out scrap of hope; "and in such a case there are many places on the road where he might stop."

"But he is in none of them. He's been sought for in all, and he's not there."

"True," was Sissy's reluctant admission.

"He'd walk the journey in two days. If he was footsore and couldn't walk, I sent him, in the letter he got, the money to ride, lest he should have none of his own to spare."

"Let us hope that to-morrow will bring something better, Rachael. Come into the air!"

Her gentle hand adjusted Rachael's shawl upon her shining black hair in the usual manner of her wearing it, and they went out. The night being fine, little knots of Hands were here and there lingering at street corners; but it was supper time with the greater part of them, and there were but few people in the streets.

"You are not so hurried now, Rachael, and your hand is cooler."

"I get better, dear, if I can only walk and breathe a little fresh. Times when I can't, I turn weak and confused."

"But you must not begin to fail, Rachael, for you may be wanted at any time to stand for Stephen. To-morrow is Saturday. If no news comes to-morrow, let us walk in the country on Sunday morning, and strengthen you for another week. Will you go?"

"Yes, dear."

They were by this time in the street where Mr. Bounderby's house stood. The way to Sissy's destination led them past the door, and they were going straight towards it. Some train had just arrived in Coketown, which had put a number of vehicles in motion, and scattered a considerable bustle about the town.—Several coaches were rattling before them and behind them as they approached Mr. Bounderby's, and one of the latter drew up with such briskness as they were in the act of passing the house, that they looked round involuntarily. The bright gaslight over Mr. Bounderby's steps showed them Mrs. Sparsit in the coach in an ecstasy of excitement, struggling to open the door; Mrs. Sparsit seeing them at the same moment, called to them to stop.

"It's a coincidence," exclaimed Mrs. Sparsit, as she was released by the coachman.—"It's a Providence! Come out, ma'am!" then said Mrs. Sparsit, to some one inside, "come out, or we'll have you dragged out!"

Hereupon, no other than the mysterious old woman descended; whom Mrs. Sparsit inconspicuously collared.

"Leave her alone, everybody!" cried Mrs. Sparsit, with great energy. "Let nobody touch her. She belongs to me. Come in, ma'am!" then said Mrs. Sparsit, reversing her former word of command. "Come in, ma'am, or we'll have you dragged in!"

The spectacle of a Roman-nosed matron of classical deportment, seizing an ancient woman by the throat, and hauling her into a dwelling-house, would have been, under any circumstances, sufficient temptation to all true English stragglers so blest as to witness

it, to force a way into that dwelling-house and see the matter out. But when the phenomenon was enhanced by the notoriety and mystery by this time associated all over the town, with the Bank robbery, it would have lured the stragglers in with an irresistible attraction, though the roof had been expected to fall upon their heads. Accordingly, the chance witnesses on the ground, consisting of the busiest of the neighbors, to the number of some five and twenty, closed in after Sissy and Rachael, as they closed in after Mrs. Sparsit and her prize; and the whole body made a disorderly irruption into Mr. Bounderby's dining room, where the people behind lost not a moment's time in mounting on the chairs to get the better of the people in front.

"Fetch Mr. Bounderby down!" cried Mrs. Sparsit. "Rachael, young woman; you know who this is?"

"It's Mrs. Pegler," said Rachael.

"I should think it is!" cried Mrs. Sparsit, exulting. "Fetch Mr. Bounderby. Stand away everybody!" Here old Mrs. Pegler, muffling herself up, and shrinking from observation, whispered a word of entreaty. "Don't tell me," said Mrs. Sparsit aloud, "I have told you twenty times coming along, that I will not leave you till I have handed you over to him myself."

Mr. Bounderby now appeared, accompanied by Mr. Gradgrind and the whelp, with whom he had been holding conference up stairs.—Mr. Bounderby looked more astonished than hospitable at sight of this uninvited party in his dining-room.

"Why, what's the matter now!" said he.—"Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am?"

"Sir," explained that worthy woman, "I trust it is my good fortune to produce a person you have much desired to find. Stimulated by my wish to relieve your mind, sir, and connecting together such imperfect clues to the part of the country in which that person might be supposed to reside, as have been afforded by the young woman Rachael, fortunately now present to identify, I have had the happiness to succeed, and to bring that person with me—I need not say most unwillingly on her part. It has not been, sir, without some trouble that I have effected this; but trouble in your service is to me a pleasure, and hunger, thirst, and cold, a real gratification."

Here Mrs. Sparsit ceased, for Mr. Bounderby's visage exhibited an extraordinary combination of all possible colors and expressions of discomfiture, as old Mrs. Pegler was disclosed to his view.

"Why, what do you mean by this!" was his highly unexpected demand, in great wrath. "I ask you, what do you mean by this, Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am?"

"Sir," exclaimed Mrs. Sparsit, faintly.

"Why don't you mind your own business, ma'am?" roared Bounderby. "How dare you

go and poke your officious nose into my family affairs?"

This allusion to her favorite feature overpowered Mrs. Sparsit. She sat down stiffly in a chair, as if she were frozen, and with a fixed stare at Mr. Bounderby, slowly grated her mittens against one another, as if they were frozen too.

"My dear Josiah," said Mrs. Pegler, trembling, "my darling boy! I am not to blame. It's not my fault, Josiah. I told this lady over and over again, that I knew she was doing what would not be agreeable to you, but she would do it."

"What did you let her bring you for? Couldn't you knock her cap off or her tooth out, or scratch her, or do something or other to her?" asked Bounderby.

"My own boy! She threatened me that if I resisted her I should be brought by constables, and it was better to come quietly than make that stir in such a—" Mrs. Pegler glanced timidly but proudly round the walls—"such a fine house as this. Indeed, indeed, it is not my fault; my dear, noble, stately boy. I have always lived quiet and secret, Josiah, my dear. I have never broken the condition once. I have never said I was your mother. I have admired you at a distance; and if I have come to town sometimes, with long times between, to take a proud peep at you, I have done it unbeknown, my love, and gone away again."

Mr. Bounderby, with his hands in his pockets, walked in impatient mortification up and down at the side of the long dining-table, while the spectators greedily took in every syllable of Mrs. Pegler's appeal, and at each succeeding syllable became more and more round-eyed. Mr. Bounderby still walking up and down when Mrs. Pegler had done, Mr. Gradgrind addressed that maligned old lady:

"I am surprised, madam," he observed with severity, "that in your old age you have the face to claim Mr. Bounderby for your son after your unnatural and inhuman treatment of him."

"*Me unnnatural!*" cried poor old Mrs. Pegler. "*Me inhuman!* To my dear boy?"

"Dear!" repeated Mr. Gradgrind. "Yes: dear in his self-made prosperity, madam, I dare say. Not very dear, however, when you deserted him in his infancy, and left him to the brutality of a drunken grandmother."

"*I deserted my Josiah!*" cried Mrs. Pegler, clasping her hands. "Now, Lord forgive you, sir, for your wicked imaginations, and for your scandal against the memory of my poor mother, who died in my arms afore Josiah was born. May you repent of it, sir, and live to know better!"

She was so very earnest and injured that Mr. Gradgrind, shocked by the possibility which dawned upon him, said in a gentler tone,

"Do you deny, then, madam, that you left your son to—to be brought up in the gutter?"

"Josiah in the gutter!" exclaimed Mrs.

Pegler. "No such a thing, sir. Never! For shame on you! My dear boy knows, and will give *you* to know, that though he come of humble parents, he come of parents that loved him as dear as the best could, and never thought it hardship on themselves to pinch a bit that he might write and cypher beautiful, and I've his books at home to show it! Aye, have I!" said Mrs. Pegler, with indignant pride. "And my dear boy knows, and will give *you* to know, sir, that after his beloved father died when he was eight year old, his mother, too, could pinch a bit, as it was her duty and her pleasure and her pride to do it, to help him out in life, and put him 'prentice. And a steady lad he was, and a kind master he had to lend him a hand, and well he worked his own way forward to be rich and thriving. And I'll give you to know, sir—for this my dear boy won't—that though his mother kept but a little village shop, he never forgot her, but pensioned me on thirty pound a year—more than I want, for I put by out of it—only making the condition that I was to keep down in my own part, and make no boasts about him, and not trouble him. And I never have, except with looking at him once a year, when he has never knowed it. And it's right," said poor old Mrs. Pegler, in affectionate championship, "that I *should* keep down in my own part, and I have no doubts that if I was here I should do a many unbecom'g things, and I am well contented, and I can keep my pride in my Josiah to myself, and I can love for love's own sake. And I am ashamed of you, sir," said Mrs. Pegler, lastly, "for your slanders and suspicions. And I never stood here afore, or wanted to stand here when my dear son said no. And I shouldn't be here now, if it hadn't been for being brought here. And for shame upon you, oh! for shame, to accuse me of being a bad mother to my son, with my son standing here to tell you so different!"

The bystanders, on and off the dining-room chairs, raised a murmur of sympathy with Mrs. Pegler, and Mr. Gradgrind felt himself innocently placed in a very distressing predicament; when Mr. Bounderby, who had never ceased walking up and down, and had every moment swelled larger and larger and grown redder and redder, stopped short.

"I don't exactly know," said Mr. Bounderby, "how I come to be favored with the attendance of the present company, but I don't inquire. When they're quite satisfied, perhaps they'll be so good as to disperse; whether they're satisfied or not, perhaps they'll be so good as to disperse. I'm not bound to deliver a lecture on my family affairs, I have not undertaken to do it, and I'm not a going to do it. Therefore those who expect any explanation whatever upon that branch of the subject will be disappointed—particularly Tom Gradgrind, and he can't know it too soon. In reference to the Bank robbery,



there has been a mistake made, concerning my mother. If there hadn't been over-officiousness it wouldn't have been made, and I hate over-officiousness at all times, whether or no. Good evening!"

Although Mr. Bounderby carried it off in these terms, holding the door open for the company to depart, there was a blustering sheepishness upon him, at once extremely crest-fallen and superlatively absurd. Detected as the bully of humility who had built his windy reputation upon lies, and in his boastfulness had put the honest truth as far away from him as if he had advanced the mean claim (there is no meaner) to tack himself on to a pedigree, he cut a most ridiculous figure. With the people filing off at the door he held, who he knew would carry what had passed to the whole town, to be given to the four winds, he could not have looked a bully more shorn and forlorn, if he had had his ears cropped. Even that unlucky female Mrs. Sparsit, fallen from her pinnacle of exultation into the Slough of Despond, was not in so bad a plight as that remarkable man and self-made humbug, Josiah Bounderby, of Coketown.

Rachael and Sissy, leaving Mrs. Pegler to occupy a bed at her son's for that night, walked together to the gate of Stone Lodge, and there parted. Mr. Gradgrind joined them before they had gone very far, and spoke with much interest of Stephen Blackpool, for whom he thought this signal failure of the suspicions against Mrs. Pegler was likely to work well.

As to the whelp; throughout this scene, as on all other late occasions, he had stuck close to Bounderby. He seemed to feel that as long as Bounderby could make no discovery without his knowledge, he was so far safe. He never visited his sister, and had only seen her once since she went home, that is to say on the night when he still stuck close to Bounderby as already related.

There was one dim unformed fear lingering about his sister's mind, to which she never gave utterance, which surrounded the graceless and ungrateful boy with a dreadful mystery.—The same dark possibility had presented itself in the same shapeless guise, this very day, to Sissy when Rachael spoke of some one who would be confounded by Stephen's return, having put him out of the way. Louisa had never spoken of harboring any suspicion of her brother in connexion with the robbery, she and Sissy had held no confidence on the subject save in that one interchange of looks when the unconscious father rested his gray head on his hand; but it was understood between them, and they both knew it. This other fear was so awful that it hovered about each of them like a ghostly shadow, neither daring to think of its being near herself, far less, of its being near the other.

And still the forced spirit which the whelp had plucked up throve with him. If Stephen Blackpool was not the thief, let him show himself. Why didn't he?

Another night. Another day and night. No Stephen Blackpool. Where was the man, and why did he not come back?

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Sunday was a bright Sunday in autumn, clear and cool, when early in the morning Sissy and Rachael met, to walk in the country.

As Coketown cast ashes not only on its own head but on the neighborhood's too—after the manner of those pious persons who do penance for their own sins by putting other people into sackcloth—it was customary for those who now and then thirsted for a draught of pure air, which is not absolutely the most wicked among the vanities of life, to get a few miles away by the railroad, and then begin their walk, or their lounge in the fields. Sissy and Rachael helped themselves out of the smoke by the usual means, and were put down at a station about midway between the town and Mr. Bounderby's retreat.

Though the green landscape was blotted here and there with heaps of coal, it was green, elsewhere and there were trees to see, and there were larks singing (though it was Sunday), and there were pleasant scents in the air, and all was overarched by a bright blue sky. In the distance one way, Coketown showed as a black mist; in another distance, hills began to rise; in a third, there was a faint change in the light of the horizon, where it shone upon the far-off sea. Under their feet, the grass was fresh; beautiful shadows of branches flickered upon it and speckled it; hedgerows were luxuriant; everything was at peace. Engines at pits' mouths, and lean old horses that had worn the circle of their daily labor into the ground were alike quiet; wheels had ceased for a short space to turn; and the great wheel of earth seemed to revolve without the shocks and noises of another time.

They walked on across the fields and down the shady lanes, sometimes getting over a fragment of a fence so rotten that it dropped at a touch of the foot, sometimes passing near a wreck of bricks and beams overgrown with grass, marking the site of some deserted works. They followed paths and tracks however slight, mounds where the grass was rank and high, and where brambles, dock-weeds, and such like vegetation were confusedly heaped together, they always avoided; for dismal stories were told in that country of the old pits hidden beneath such indications.

The sun was high when they set down to rest. They had seen no one, near or distant, for a long time, and the solitude remained unbroken. "It is so still here, Rachael, and the way is so untrodden, that I think we must be the first who have been here all the summer."

As Sissy said it, her eyes were attracted by another of those rotten fragments of fence upon the ground. She got up to look at it. "And yet I don't know. This has not been broken very long. The wood is quite fresh

where it gave way. Here are footsteps too. O Rachael!"

She ran back and caught her round the neck. Rachael had already started up.

"What is the matter?"

"I don't know. There is a hat lying in the grass."

They went forward together. Rachael took it up, shaking from head to foot. She broke into a passion of tears and lamentations; Stephen Blackpool was written in his own hand on the inside.

"O the poor lad, the poor lad! He has been made away with. He is lying murdered here!"

"Is there—has the hat any blood upon it?" Sissy faltered.

They were afraid to look, but they did examine it, and found no mark of violence, inside or out. It had been lying there some days, for rain and dew had stained it, and it left the mark of its shape on the grass where it had fallen. They looked fearfully about them, without moving, but could see nothing more. "Rachael," Sissy whispered, "I will go on a little by myself."

She had unclasped her hand, and was in the act of stepping forward, when Rachael caught her in both arms with a scream that resounded over the wide landscape. Before them, at their very feet, was the brink of a black, ragged chasm, hidden by the thick grass. They sprang back, and fell upon their knees, each hiding her face upon the other's neck.

"O my good God! He's down there! Down there!" At first this and her terrific screams were all that could be got from Rachael by any tears, by any prayers, by any representations, by any means. It was impossible to hush her, and it was deadly necessary to hold her, or she would have distractedly flung herself down the shaft.

"Rachael, dear Rachael, good Rachael, for the love of Heaven, not these dreadful cries! Think of Stephen, think of Stephen, think of Stephen!"

By an earnest repetition of this entreaty, poured out in all the agony of such a time, Sissy at last brought her to be silent, and to look at her with a tearless face of stone.

"Rachael, Stephen may be living. You wouldn't leave him lying maimed at the bottom of this dreadful place a moment if you could bring help to him!"

"No, no, no!"

"Don't stir from here, for his sake! Let me go and listen."

She shuddered to approach the pit, but she crept towards it on her hands and knees, and called to him as loud as she could call. She listened, but no sound replied. She called again and listened; still no answering sound. She did this twenty, thirty times. She took a clod of earth from the broken ground where he had stumbled, and threw it in. She could not hear it fall.

The wide prospect, so beautiful in its still-

ness but a few minutes ago, almost carried despair to her brave heart, as she rose and looked all round her seeing no help. "Rachael, we must lose not a moment. We must go in different directions, seeking aid. You shall go by the way we have come, and I will go forward by the path. Tell any one you see, and every one, what has happened. Think of Stephen, think of Stephen!"

She knew by Rachael's face that she might trust her now. After standing for a moment to see her running, wringing her hands as she went, she turned and went upon her own search; she stopped at the hedge to tie her shawl there as a guide to the place, then threw her bonnet aside, and ran, as she had never run before.

Run, Sissy, run, in Heaven's name! Don't stop for breath. Run, run! Quickening herself by carrying such entreaties in her thoughts, she ran from field to field and lane to lane, and place to place, as she had never run before, until she came to a shed by an engine-house, where two men lay in the shade asleep on straw.

First to wake them, and next to tell them all so wild and breathless as she was, what had brought her there, were difficulties: but they no sooner understood her than their spirits were on fire like hers. One of the men was in a drunken slumber, but on his comrade's shouting to him that a man had fallen down the OLD HELL SHAFT, he started out to a pool of dirty water, put his head in it, and came back sober.

With these two men she ran to another, half-a-mile further, and with that one to another, while they ran elsewhere. Then a horse was found, and she got another man to ride for life or death to the railroad, and send a message to Louisa, which she wrote and gave him. By this time a whole village was up; and win-lasses, ropes, poles, buckets, candles, lanterns, all things necessary, were fast collecting and being brought into one place to be carried to the Old Hell Shaft.

It seemed now hours and hours since she had left the lost man lying in the grave where he had been buried alive. She could not bear to remain away from it any longer—it was like deserting him—and she hurried swiftly back, accompanied by half-a-dozen laborers, including the drunken man whom the news had sobered, and who was the best man of all. When they came to the Old Hell Shaft they found it as lonely as she had left it. The men called and listened as she had done, and examined the edge of the chasm, and settled how it had happened, and then sat down to wait until the implements they wanted should come up.

Every sound of insects in the air, every stirring of the leaves, every whisper among these men, made Sissy tremble, for she thought it was a cry at the bottom of the pit. But the wind blew idly over it, and no sound arose to the surface, and they sat upon the grass, wait-

ing and waiting. After they had waited some time, straggling people who had heard of the accident began to come up; then the real help of implements began to arrive. In the midst of this Rachael returned; and with her party there was a surgeon, who brought some wine and medicines. But the expectation among the working pitmen that the man would be found alive, was very slight indeed.

There being now people enough present to impede the work; the sobered man put himself at the head of the rest, or was put there by the general consent, and made a large ring round the Old Hell Shaft, and appointed men to keep it. Besides such volunteers as were accepted to work, only Sissy and Rachael were at first permitted within this ring; but later in the day, when the message brought an express from Coketown, Mr. Gradgrind and Louisa, and Mr. Bounderby, and the whelp, were also there.

The sun was four hours lower than when Sissy and Rachael had first sat down upon the grass, before a means of enabling two men to descend securely was rigged with poles and ropes. Difficulties had arisen in the construction of this machine, simple as it was; requisites had been found wanting, and messages had to go and return. It was five o'clock in the afternoon of a bright autumnal Sunday, before a candle was sent down to try the air, while three or four rough faces stood crowded close together, all attentively watching it: the men at the windlass lowering as they were told. The candle was brought up again, feebly burning, and then some water was cast in. Then the bucket was hooked on, and the sobered man and another got in with lights, giving the word "Lower away!"

As the rope went out, tight and strained, and the windlass creaked, there was not a breath among the one or two hundred men and women looking on, that came as it was wont to come. The signal was given and the windlass stopped, with abundant rope to spare. Apparently so long an interval ensued, with the men at the windlass standing idle, that some women shrieked that another accident had happened. But the surgeon who held the watch, declared five minutes not to have elapsed yet, and sternly admonished them to keep silence. He had not well done speaking when the windlass was reversed and worked again. Practised eyes knew that it did not go as heavily as it would if both workmen had been coming up, and that only one was returning.

The rope came in tight and strained, and ring after ring was coiled upon the barrel of the windlass, and all eyes were fastened on the pit. The sobered man was brought up, and leaped out briskly on the grass. There was a universal cry of "alive or dead?" and then a deep, profound hush.

When he said "alive," a great shout arose, and many eyes had tears in them.

"But he's hurt very bad," he added, as soon as he could make himself heard again.

"Where's doctor? He's hurt so very bad, sir, that we dunno how to get him up."

They all consulted together, and looked anxiously at the surgeon, as he asked some questions and shook his head on receiving the replies. The sun was setting now, and the red light in the evening sky touched every face there, and caused it to be distinctly seen in all its wrapt suspense.

The consultation ended in the men returning to the windlass, and the pitman going down again, carrying the wine and some other small matters with him. Then the other man came up. In the mean time, under the surgeon's directions, some men brought a bundle, on which others made a thick bed of spare clothes covered with loose straw, while he himself contrived some bandages and slings from shawls and handkerchiefs. As these were made, they were hung upon the arm of the pitman who had last come up, with instructions how to use them; and as he stood, shown by the light he carried, leaning his powerful loose hand upon one of the poles, and sometimes glancing down the pit and sometimes glancing round upon the people, he was not the least conspicuous figure in the scene. It was dark now, and torches were kindled.

It appeared from the little this man said to those about him, which was quickly repeated all over the circle, that the lost man had fallen upon a mass of crumbled rubbish with which the pit was half choked up, and that his fall had been further broken by some jagged earth at the side. He lay upon his back with one arm doubled under him, and according to his own belief had hardly stirred since he fell, except that he had moved his free hand to a side pocket, in which he remembered to have some bread and meat (of which he had swallowed crumbs), and had likewise scooped up a little water in it now and then. He had come straight away from his work on being written to; and had walked the whole journey; and was on his way to Mr. Bounderby's country-house after dark, when he fell. He was crossing that dangerous country at such a dangerous time because he was wholly innocent of what was laid to his charge, and couldn't rest from coming the nearest way to deliver himself up. The Old Hell Shaft, the pitman said, with a curse upon it was worthy of its bad name to the last; for though Stephen could speak now, he believed it would soon be found to have mangled the life out of him.

When all was ready, this man still taking his last hurried charges from his comrades and the surgeon, after the windlass had begun to lower him, disappeared into the pit. The rope went out as before, the signal was made as before, and the windlass stopped. No man removed his hand from it now. Every one waited with his grasp set, and his body bent down to the work, ready to reverse and wind in. At length the signal was given, and all the ring leaned forward.



For now the rope came in tightened and strained to its utmost as it appeared, and the men turned heavily, and the windlass complained. It was scarcely endurable to look at the rope, and think of its giving way. But ring after ring was coiled upon the barrel of the windlass safely, and the connecting chains appeared, and finally the bucket with the two men holding on at the sides—a sight to make the head swim, and oppress the heart—and tenderly supporting between them, slung and tied within, the figure of a poor crushed human creature.

A low murmur of pity went round the throng, and the women wept aloud, as this form, almost without form, was moved very slowly from its iron deliverance, and laid upon the bed of straw. At first, none but the surgeon went close to it. He did what he could in its adjustment on the couch, but the best that he could do was to cover it. That gently done, he called to him Rachael and Sissy, and at that time the pale, worn, patient face was seen looking up at the sky, with the broken right hand lying bare on the outside of the covering garments, as if waiting to be taken by another hand.

They gave him drink, moistened his face with water, and administered some drops of cordial and wine. Though he lay quite motionless looking up at the sky, he smiled and said, "Rachael."

She stooped down on the grass at his side, and bent over him until her eyes were between his and the sky, for he could not so much as turn them to look at her.

"Rachael, my dear."

She took his hand. He smiled again and said, "Don't let it go."

"Thou'rt in great pain, my own dear Stephen?"

"I ha' been, but not now. I ha' been—dreadful, and dree, and long, my dear—but 'tis ower now. Ah Rachel, aw a muddle! Fro' first to last, a muddle!"

The spectre of his old look seemed to pass as he said the word.

"I ha' fell into th' pit, my dear, as have coast wi'in the knowledge o' old folk now livin' hundreds and hundreds o' men's lives—fathers, sons, brothers, dear to thousands an' thousands, and keepin' 'em fro' want and hunger. I ha' fell into a pit that ha' been wi' th' fire-damp crueller than battle. I ha' read on't in the public petition, as onny one may read, fro' the men that works in pits, in which they ha' pray'n an' pray'n the law-makers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children that they loves as well as gentlefolk loves theirs. When it were in work, it killed wi'out need; when 'tis let alone, it kills wi'out need. See how we die an' no need, one way an' another—in a muddle every day!"

He faintly said it, without any anger against any one. Merely as the truth.

"Thy little sister, Rachael, thou hast not forgot her. Thou'rt not like to forget her now, and me so nigh her. Thou know'st, poor, patient, suff'rin' dear, how thou didst work for her, sett'n all day long in her little chair at thy window; an' she died, young and misshapen awlung o' sickly air as had'n no need to be, an' awlung o' workin' people's miserable homes. A muddle! Aw a muddle!"

Louisa approached him, but he could not see her, lying with his face turned up to the night sky.

"If aw th' things that touches us, my dear, was not so muddled, I should'n ha' had'n need to coom heer. If we was not in a muddle among ourseln, I should'n ha' been by my own fellow weavers and workin' brothers, so mistook. If Mr. Bounderby had ever know'd me right—rather if he'd ever know'd me at aw—he would'n ha' took'n offence wi' me.—He would'n ha' suspect'n me. But look up yonder, Rachael! Look above."

Following his eyes, she saw that he was gazing at a star.

"It ha' shined upon me" he said reverently, "in my pain and trouble down below. It ha' shined into my mind. I ha' look'n an' thout o' thee, Rachael, till the muddle in my mind have cleared awa above a bit, I hope. If soom ha' been wantin' in unnerstannin' me better, I, too, ha' been wantin' in unnerstannin' them better. When I got thy letter, I easily believed that what the young lady sen an' done to me, an' what her brother sen an' done to me were one, an' that there were a wicked plot bewixt un. When I fell, I were in anger wi' her, an' hurryin' on t' be as onjust t' her as others was t' me. But in our judgment like as in our doins, we mun bear and forbear. In my pain an' trouble lookin up yonder,—wi' it shinin' on me—I ha' seen more clear and ha' made it my dyin' prayer that aw' th' world may on'y come together more, an' get a better unnerstannin' o' one another, than when I were in't my own weak seln."

Louisa hearing what he said, bent over him on the opposite side to Rachael, so that he could see her.

"You ha' heard?" he said, after a few moments' silence, "I ha' not forgot yo', leddy."

"Yes, Stephen, I have heard you. And your prayer is mine."

"You ha' a father. Will yo' tak a message to him?"

"He is here," said Louisa, with dread.—"Shall I bring him to you?"

"If yo' please."

Louisa returned with her father. Standing hand-in-hand, they both looked down upon his solemn countenance.

"Sir, yo' will clear me an' mak' my name good wi' aw men. This I leave to yo'."

Mr. Gradgrind was troubled and asked how?

"—Sir," was the reply, "yor son will tell yo how. Ask him. I mak' no charges. I leave none ahint me, not a single word. I ha' sen an' spok'n wi' your son, one night. I ask no

more o' yo' than that yo clear me—an' I trust to yo to do't."

The bearers being now ready to carry him away, and the surgeon being anxious for his removal, those who had torches or lanterns, prepared to go in front of the litter. Before it was raised, and while they were arranging how to go, he said to Rachael, looking upward at the star,—

"Often as I coom to myself, and found it shinin' on me down there in my trouble, I thowt it were the star as guided to Our Saviour's home, I awmust think it be the very star!"

They lifted him up, and he was overjoyed to find that they were about to take him in the direction whither the star seemed to him to lead.

"Rachael, beloved lass! Don't let go my hand. We may walk together t'night my dear!"

"I will hold thy hand, and keep beside thee, Stephen, all the way."

"Bless thee! Will soombody be pleased to coover my face?"

They carried him very gently along the fields, and down the lanes, and over the wide landscape; Rachael always holding the hand in hers. Very few whispers broke the mournful silence. It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer's rest.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

Before the ring formed round the Old Hell Shaft was broken, one figure had disappeared from within it. Mr. Bounderby and his shadow had not stood near Louisa, who held her father's arm, but in a retired place by themselves. When Mr. Gradgrind was summoned to the couch, Sissy, attentive to all that happened, slipped behind that wicked shadow—a sight in the horror of his face, if there had been eyes there for any sight but one—and whispered in his ear. Without turning his head, for she had begun by telling him not even to look round, he conferred with her a few moments, and vanished. Thus the whelp had gone out of the circle before the people moved.

When the father reached home, he sent a message to Mr. Bounderby's, desiring his son to come to him directly. The reply was, that Mr. Bounderby having missed him in the crowd, and seen nothing of him since, had supposed him to be at Stone Lodge.

"I believe, father," said Louisa, "he will not come back to town to-night." Mr. Gradgrind turned away and said no more.

In the morning, he went down to the Bank himself as soon as it was opened, and seeing his son's place empty, (he had not the courage to look in at first,) went back along the street to meet Mr. Bounderby on his way there. To whom he said that, for reasons he would soon explain, but entreated not then to be asked for, he had found it necessary to employ his

son at a distance for a little while. Also, that he was charged with the duty of vindicating Stephen Blackpool's memory, and declaring the thief. Mr. Bounderby, quite confounded, stood stock still in the street after his father-in-law had left him, swelling like an immense soap-bubble, without its beauty.

Mr. Gradgrind went home, locked himself in his room, and kept it all that day. When Sissy and Louisa tapped at his door, he said, without opening it, "Not now, my dears; in the evening." On their return in the evening, he said, "I am not able yet—to-morrow." He ate nothing all day, and had no candle after dark, and they heard him walking to and fro late at night.

But in the morning he appeared at breakfast at the usual hour, and took his usual place at the table. Aged and bent he looked, and quite bowed down; and yet he looked a wiser man, and a better man, than in the days when in this life he wanted nothing but facts. Before he left the room, he appointed a time for them to come to him, and so, with his gray head drooping, went away.

"Dear father," said Louisa, when they kept their appointment, "you have three young children left. They will be different. I will be different yet, with Heaven's help."

She gave her hand to Sissy, as if she meant with the help of her loving heart.

"Your wretched brother," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Do you think he had planned this robbery, when he went with you to the lodging?"

"I fear so, father. I know he had wanted money very much, and had spent a great deal."

"The poor man being about to leave the town, it came into his evil brain to cast suspicion on him?"

"I think it must have flashed upon him while he sat there, father. For I asked him to go there with me. The visit did not originate with him."

"He had some conversation with the poor man. Did he take him aside?"

"He took him out of the room. I asked him afterwards, why he had done so, and he made a plausible excuse; but since last night, father, and when I remember the circumstances by its light, I am afraid I can imagine too truly what passed between them."

"Let me know," said her father, "if your thoughts present your guilty brother in the same dark view as mine do."

"I am afraid, father," reiterated Louisa, "that he must have made some representation to Stephen Blackpool—perhaps in my name, perhaps in his own—which induced him to do it good faith and honesty, what he had never done before, and to wait about the Bank those two or three nights before he left the town."

"Too plain!" returned the father. "Too plain!"

He shaded his face, and remained silent for some moments. Recovering himself, he said:

"And now, how is he to be found? How is he to be saved from justice? In the few hours

that I can possibly allow to elapse before I publish the truth, how is he to be found by us and only by us? Ten thousand pounds could not effect it."

"Sissy has effected it, father."

He raised his eyes to where she stood, like a good fairy in his house, and said in a tone of softened gratitude and grateful kindness, "It is always you, my child."

"We had our fears," Sissy explained, glancing at Louisa, "before y'es erday: and when I saw you brought to the side of the litter last night, and heard what passed (being close to Rachael all the time), I went to him when no one saw, and said to him, 'Don't look at me! See where your father is. Escape at once, for his sake and your own!' He was in a tremble before I whispered to him, and he started and trembled more, and said, 'Where can I go? I have very little money, and I don't know who will hide me!' I thought of father's old circus. I have not forgotten where Mr. Sleary goes at this time of year, and I read of him in a paper only the other day. I told him to hurry there, and tell his name, and ask Mr. Sleary to hide him till I came. 'I'll get to him before the morning,' he said. And I saw him shrink away among the people."

"Thank God!" exclaimed his father. "He may be got abroad yet."

It was the more hopeful, as the town to which Sissy had directed him was within three hours' journey of Liverpool, whence he could be swiftly despatched to any part of the world. But caution being necessary in communicating with him—for there was a greater danger every moment of his being suspected now, and nobody could be sure at heart but that Mr. Bounderby himself, in a bullying view of public zeal, might play a Roman part—it was consented that Sissy and Louisa should repair to the place in question, by a circuitous course, alone; and that the unhappy father, setting forth at another time, and leaving the town by an opposite direction, should get round to the same bourne by another and wider route. It was further agreed that he should not present himself to Mr. Sleary, lest his intentions should be mistrusted, or the intelligence of his arrival should cause his son to take flight anew; but that the communication should be left to Sissy and Louisa to open, and that they should inform the cause of so much misery and disgrace of his father's being at hand and of the purpose for which they had come. When these arrangements had been well considered and were fully understood by all three, it was time to begin to carry them into execution. Early in the afternoon Mr. Gradgrind walked direct from his own house into the country, to be taken up on the line by which he was to travel; and at night the remaining two set forth upon their different course, encouraged by not seeing any face they knew.

The two travelled all night, except when they were left for odd numbers of minutes at

branch places up illimitable flights of steps or down wells—which was the only variety of those branches—and, early in the morning, were turned out on a swamp, a mile or two from the town they sought. From this dismal spot they were rescued by a savage old postilion, who happened to be up early, kicking a horse in a fly, and so were smuggled into the town by all the back lanes where the pigs lived: which, although not a magnificent or even savory approach, was, as is usual in such cases, the legitimate highway.

The first thing they saw on entering the town was the skeleton of Sleary's Circus. The company had departed for another town more than twenty miles off, and had opened there last night. The connexion between the two places was by a hilly turnpike road, and the travelling on that road was very slow. Though they took but a hasty breakfast, and no rest, (which it would have been in vain to seek under such anxious circumstances,) it was noon before they began to find the bills of Sleary's Horse-riding on barns and walls, and one o'clock when they stopped in the market place.

A Grand Morning Performance by the Riders commencing at that very hour, was in course of announcement by the bellman as they set their feet upon the stones of the street. Sissy recommended that, to avoid making inquiries and attracting attention in the town, they should present themselves to pay at the door. If Mr. Sleary were taking the money, he would be sure to know her, and would proceed with discretion. If he were not, he would be sure to see them inside, and knowing what he had done with the fugitive, would proceed with discretion still.

Therefore they repaired with fluttering hearts to the well-remembered booth. The flag with the inscription, "Sleary's Horse-Riding," was there, and the Gothic niche was there, but Mr. Sleary was not there. Master Kidderminster, grown too maturely turfy to be received by the wildest credulity as Cupid any more, had yielded to the invincible force of circumstances (and his beard), and in the capacity of a man who made himself generally useful, presided on this occasion over the exchequer—having also a drum in reserve, on which to expend his leisure moments and superfluous forces. In the extreme sharpness of his look out for base coin, Mr. Kidderminster, as at present situated, never saw anything but money; so Sissy passed him unrecognised, and they went in.

The Emperor of Japan on a steady old white horse stencilled with black spots, was twirling five wash-hand basins at once, as it is the favorite recreation of that monarch to do. Sissy, though well acquainted with his Royal line, had no personal knowledge of the present Emperor, and his reign was peaceful. Miss Josephine Sleary in her celebrated graceful Equestrian Tyrolean Flower Act, was then announced by a new clown (who humorously said Canilflower Act), and Mr. Sleary appeared, leading her in.



Mr. Sleary had only made one cut at the Clown with his long whip lash, and the Clown had only said, "If you do it again, I'll throw the horse at you!" when Sissy was recognised both by father and daughter. But they got through the Act with great self-possession, and Mr. Sleary, saving for the first instant, conveyed no more expression into his locomotive eye than into his fixed one. The performance seemed a little long to Sissy and Louisa in their suspense, particularly when it stopped to afford the Clown an opportunity of telling Mr. Sleary (who said "Indeed, sir?" to all his observations in the calmest way, and with his eye on the house) about two legs sitting on three legs looking at one leg, when in came four legs, and laid hold of one leg, and up got two legs, caught hold of three legs, and threw 'em at four legs, who ran away with one leg. For although an ingenious Allegory relating to a butcher, a three-legged stool, a dog, and a leg of mutton, this narrative consumed time, and they were painfully anxious. At last, however, little fair-haired Josephine made her curtsy amid great applause; and the Clown, left alone in the ring, had just warmed himself and said, "Now I'll have a turn!" when Sissy was touched on the shoulder and beckoned out.

She took Louisa with her, and they were received by Mr. Sleary in a very little private apartment, with canvas sides, a grass floor, and a wooden ceiling all aslant, on which the box company stamped their approbation as if they were coming through. "Thethilia," said Mr. Sleary, who had brandy and water at hand, "it doth me good to thee you. You wath alwayth a favorite with uth, and you've done uth credit thinth the old timeth I'm thure. You muht thee our people, my dear, afore we thepeak of bithnith, or they'll break their hearth—ethpethially the women. Here'th Jothphine hath been and got married to E. W. B. Childerth, and thee hath got a boy, and though he'th only three yearth old, he stickth on to any pony you can bring againtht him. He'th named The Little Wonder of Theolathic Equitation; and if you don't hear of that boy at Athley'th, you'll hear of him at Parith.—And you recollect Kidderminthter, that wath thought to be rather thweet upon yourthelf? Well. He'th married too. Married a widdier. Old enough to be hith mother. Thee wath Tight rope, thee wath, and now thee'th nothing—ou account of fat. They've got two children, tho we're thtrong in the Fairy bithnith and the Nurthery dodge. If you wath to thee our Children in the Wood, with their father and mother both a dyin' on a horthie—their uncle a rethieving of 'em ath hith wardth, on a horthie, then they both a goin' a blackberryin' on a horthie—and the Robinth a coming to cover 'em with leavth. upon a horthie—you'd thay that wath the completeth thing ath ever you thet your eyeth on! And you remember Emma Gordon, my dear, ath wath a'moht a mother to you? Of courthe you do; I needn't athk.

Well. Emma, thee lotht her huthband. He wath throw'd a heavy back-fall off an Elephant in a thort of Pagoda thing ath the Thultan of the Indieth, and he never got the better of it, and thee married a theecund time; married a Cheethemonger ath fell in love with her from the front, and he'th a Overtheer and makin' a fortun'!"

These various changes Mr. Sleary, very short of breath now, related with great heartiness, and with a wonderful kind of innocence, considering what a bleary and brandy-and-water-y old veteran he was. Afterwards he brought in Josephine, and E. W. B. Childers (rather deeply lined in the jaws by daylight) and The Little Wonder of Scholastic Equitation, and, in a word, all the company. Amazing creatures they were in Louisa's eyes, so white and pink of complexion, so scant of dress, and so demonstrative of leg; but it was very pleasant, for all that, to see them crowding about Sissy, and very natural in Sissy to be unable to refrain from tears.

"There! Now Thethilia hath kitht all the children, and hugged all the women, and thaken handth all round with the men, clear, every one of you, and ring in the band for the thecond part!" said Sleary.

As soon as they were gone, he continued in a low tone. "Now, Thethilia, I don't athk to know any theereth, but I thuppothe I may consider thith to be Mith Thquire."

"This is his sister. Yes."

"And t'other one'th daughter. That'h what I mean. Hope I thee you well, mith.—And I hope the Thquire'th well?"

"My father will be here soon," said Louisa, anxious to bring him to the point. "Is my brother safe?"

"Thafe and thound!" he replied. "I want you juth to take a peep at the ring, mith, through here. Thethilia, you know the dodg-eth; find a thpy-hole for yourthelf."

They each looked through a chink in the boards.

"That'th Jack the Giant Killer—a piethie of comic infant bithnith," said Sleary. "There'th a property houthie, you thee, for Jack to hide in; there'th my Clown with a thanthepan-lid and a thpit for Jack'th thervant; there'th little Jack himthelf in a thplenoid thoot of armour; there'th two comic black thervanth twithe ath big ath the houthie, to thand by it and to bring it in and clear it; and the Giant (a very expentive bathket one), he an't on yet. Now do you thee 'em all?"

"Yes," they both said.

"Look at 'em again," said Sleary, "look at 'em well. You thee 'em all? Very good. Now, mith;" he put a form for them to sit on; "I have my opinionth, and the Thquire your father hath hith. I don't want to know what your brother'th been up to; ith better for me not to know. All I thay ith, the Thquire hath thtood by Thethilia, and I'll thtand by the Thquire. Your brother ith one o' them black thervanth."

Louisa uttered an exclamation, partly of distress, partly of satisfaction.

"Ith a fact," said Sleary, "and even know-in that, you couldn't put your finger on him. Let the Thquire come. I thall keep your brother here after the performanth. I thant undreth him, nor yet wath bith paint off. Let the Thquire come here after the performanth, or come here yourthelf after the performanth, and you thall find your brother, and have the whole plathe to talk to him in. Never mind the lookth of him ath long ath he'th well hid."

Louisa, with many thanks and with a lightened load, detained Mr. Sleary no longer then. She left her love for her brother, with her eyes full of tears, and she and Sissy went away until later in the afternoon.

Mr. Gradgrind arrived within an hour afterwards. He too had encountered no one whom he knew, and was now sanguine, with Sleary's assistance, of getting his disgraced son to Liverpool in the night. As neither of the three could be his companion without almost identifying him under any disguise, he prepared a letter to a correspondent whom he could trust, beseeching him to ship the bearer off at any cost, to North or South America, or any distant part of the world to which he could be the most speedily and privately dispatched. This done, they walked about, waiting for the Circus to be quite vacated: not only by the audience, but by the company and by the horses.—After watching it a long time, they saw Mr. Sleary bring out a chair and sit down by the side door, snoring, as if that were his signal that they might approach.

"Your thervant, Thquire," was his cautious salutation as they passed in. "If you want me you'll find me here. You muthn't mind your son having a comic livery on."

They all three went in, and Mr. Gradgrind sat down, forlorn, on the Clown's performing chair in the middle of the ring. On one of the back benches, remote in the subdued light and the strangeness of the place, sat the villainous whelp, sulky to the last, whom he had the misery to call his son.

In a preposterous coat, like a beadle's, with cuffs and flaps exaggerated to an unspeakable extent, in an immense waistcoat, knee-breeches buckled shoes, and a mad cocked-hat, with nothing fitting him, and everything of coarse material, moth-eaten and full of holes; with seams in his black face, where fear and heat had started through the greasy composition daubed all over it; anything so grimly, detestably, ridiculously shameful as the whelp in his comic livery, Mr. Gradgrind never could by any other means have believed in, weighable and measurable fact though it was. And one of his model children had come to this!

At first the whelp would not draw any nearer, but persisted in remaining up there by himself. Yielding at length, if any concession so sullenly made can be called yielding, to the entreaties of Sissy—for Louisa he disowned altogether—he came down bench by bench

until he stood in the sawdust, on the verge of the circle, as far as possible, within its limits, from where his father sat.

"How was this done?" asked the father.

"How was what done?" moodily inquired the son.

"This robbery," said the father, raising his voice upon the word.

"I forced the safe myself over night, and shut it up ajar before I went away. I had the key that was found made long before. I dropped it that morning, that it might be supposed to have been used. I didn't take the money all at once; I pretended to put my balance away every night, but I didn't. Now you know a'l about it.

"If a thunderbolt had fallen on me," said the father, "it would have shocked me less than this."

"I don't see why," returned the son. "So many people are employed in situations of trust; so many people out of so many will be dishonest. I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its being a law. How can I help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself.

The father buried his face in his hands, and the son stood in his disgraceful grot squeens, biting straw. His hands, with the black partly worn away inside, looking like the hands of a monkey. The evening was fast closing in, and from time to time he turned the whites of his eyes restlessly and impatiently towards his father. They were the only parts of his face that showed any life or expression, the pigment upon it was so thick.

"You must be got to Liverpool, and sent on board."

"I suppose I must. I can't be more miserable anywhere," whimpered the whelp, "than I have been here, ever since I can remember. That's one thing."

Mr. Gradgrind went to the door, and returned with Sleary; to whom he submitted the question—how to get this deplorable object away.

"Why, I've been thinking of it, Thquire.—There'th not muth time to lothe, tho you muth thay yeth or no. Ith over twenty mileth to the rail. Thereth a coath in half an hour, that gothe to the rail, purpothe to eath the mail train. That train will take him right to Liverpool."

"But look at him," groaned Mr. Gradgrind. "Will any coach—"

"I don't mean that he should go in the comic livery," said Sleary. "Thay the word, and I'll make a jothkin of him out of the wardrobe in five minutes."

"I don't understand," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"A jothkin—a carter. Make up your mind quick, Thquire; there'll be beer to feth. I've never met with nothing but beer ath'll ever clean a comic blackamoor."

Mr. Gradgrind rapidly assented. Mr. Sleary rapidly turned out from a box a smock frock, a felt hat, and other essentials; the whelp

rapidly changed clothes behind a screen of baize; Mr. Sleary rapidly brought beer, and washed him white again.

"Now," said Sleary, "come along to the coach, and jump up behind; I'll go with you there, and they'll thuppothe you one of my people. Thay farewell to your family, and tharp'th the word." With which he delicately retired.

"Here is your letter," said Mr. Gradgrind. "All necessary means will be provided for you. Atone by repentance and better conduct for this shocking act of dishonesty, and the dreadful consequences to which it has led. Give me your hand, my poor boy, and may God forgive you, as I do."

The culprit was moved to a few abject tears by these words, and their pathetic tone. But when Louisa opened her arms, he repulsed her afresh.

"Not you. No. I don't want to have anything to say to you."

"O Tom, Tom, do we end so, after all my love?"

"After all your love!" he returned, obdurately. "Pretty love! Leaving old Bounderby to himself, and packing my best friend, Mr. Harthouse, off, and going home just when I was in the greatest danger. Pretty love that! Coming out with every word about our having gone to that place, when you saw the net was gathering round me. Pretty love that! You have regularly given me up. You never cared for me."

"Tharp'th the word!" said Sleary, at the door.

They all confusedly went out, Louisa crying to him that she forgave him his ingratitude, and loved him still, and that he would one day be sorry to have left her so, and glad to think of those her last words when far away; when some one ran against them. Mr. Gradgrind and Sissy, who were both before him while his sister yet clung to his shoulder, stopped and recoiled.

For there was Bitzer, out of breath, his thin lips parted, his thin nostrils distended, his white eye-lashes quivering, his colorless face more colorless than ever, as if he ran himself into a white heat, when other people ran themselves into a glow. There he stood, panting and heaving as if he had never stopped since the night, now long ago, when he had run them down before.

"I'm sorry to interfere with your plans," said Bitzer, shaking his head, "but I can't allow myself to be done by horse-riders. I must have young Mr. Tom; he musn't be got away by horseriders; here he is in a smock frock, and I must have him."

By the collar, too, it seemed; for so he took possession of him.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

They went back into the booth, Sleary shutting the door to keep intruders out, and Bitzer,

still holding the paralyzed culprit by the collar, stood in the ring blinking at his old patron through the darkness of the twilight.

"Bitzer," said Mr. Gradgrind, broken down, and miserably submissive to him, "have you a heart?"

"The circulation, sir," returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, "couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey, relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I must have a heart."

"Is it accessible," cried Mr. Gradgrind, "to any compassionate influence?"

"It is accessible to reason, sir," returned the excellent young man—"and to nothing else."

They stood looking at each other, Mr. Gradgrind's face as white as the pursuer's.

"What motive—even what motive in reason, can you have for preventing the escape of this wretched youth," said Mr. Gradgrind, "and crushing his miserable father? See his sister here. Pity us!"

"Sir," returned Bitzer, in a very business-like and logical manner, "since you ask me what motive I have in reason for taking young Mr. Tom back to Coketown, it is only reasonable to let you know. I have suspected young Mr. Tom of this Bank robbery from the first. I had had my eye upon him before that time, and I knew his ways. I have kept my observations to myself, but I have made them, and I have got ample proofs against him now, besides his running away, and besides his own confession, which I was just in time to overhear. I had the pleasure of watching your house yesterday morning, and following you here. I am going to take young Mr. Tom back to Coketown, in order to deliver him over to Mr. Bounderby. Sir, I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Bounderby will then promote me to young Mr. Tom's situation. And I wish to have his situation, sir, for it will be a rise to me and will do me good."

"If this is solely a question of self-interest with you——" Mr. Gradgrind began.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, sir," said Bitzer; "but I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest. It's your only hold. We are so constituted. I was brought up in that catechism when I was young, sir, as you are aware."

"What sum of money," said Mr. Gradgrind, "will you set against your expected promotion?"

"Thank you, sir," returned Bitzer, "for hinting at the proposal; but I will not set any sum against it. Knowing that your clear head would propose that alternative, I have gone over the calculations in my mind; and I find that to compound a felony, even on very high terms indeed, would not be as safe and good for me as my improved prospects in the Bank."

"Bitzer," said Mr. Gradgrind, stretching out his hands as though he would have said—



See how miserable I am! "Birzer, I have but one chance left to soften you. You were many years at my school. If, in remembrance of the pains bestowed on you, you can persuade yourself in any degree to disregard your present interest and release my son, I entreat and pray you to give him the benefit of that remembrance."

"I really wonder, sir," rejoined the old pupil, in an argumentative manner, "to find you takin' a position so untenable. My schooling was paid for; it was a bargain; and when I came away, the bargain ended."

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy, that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without return. Gratitude was to be abolished, and the virtues springing from it were not to be. The whole existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico economical place, and we had no business there.

"I don't deny," added Bitzer, "that my schooling was cheap. But that comes right. I was made in the cheapest market, and have to dispose of myself in the dearest."

He was a little troubled here, by Louisa and Sissy crying.

"Pray don't do that," said he, "it's of no use doing that; it only worries. You seem to think that I have some animosity against young Mr. Tom; whereas I have none at all. I am only grieved, on the reasonable grounds I have mentioned, to take him back to Coketown. If he was to resist, I should set up the cry of Stop Thief! But he won't resist, you may depend upon it."

Mr. Sleary, who, with his mouth open and his rolling eye as immovably jammed in his head as his fixed one, had listened to those doctrines with profound attention, here stepped forward.

"Thquire, you know perfectly well, and your daughter knowth perfectly well (better than you, becaushe I thed it to her) that I didn't know what your thon had done, and that I didn't want to know—that I thed it wath better not, though I only thought it wath some thky-larking. However, thith young man having made it known to be a robbery of a bank, why, that's a theriouth thing; muth too theriouth a thing for me to compound, ath thith young man hath very properly called it; conthequently, Thquire, you muthn't quarrel with me if I take thith young man'th thide, and thav he'th right and there'th no help for it. But I tell you what I'll do, Thquire; I'll drive your thon and thith young man over to the rail, and prevent expothure here. I can't conthent to do more, but I'll do that."

Fresh lamentations from Louisa, and deeper affliction on Mr. Gradgrind's part followed this desertion of them by their last friend. But Sissy glanced at him with great attention; nor did she in her own breast misunderstand him,

for as they were all going out again, he favored her with one slight roll of his movable eye, desiring her to linger behind. As he locked the door he said excitedly:

"The Thquire thtoud by you, Thethilia, and I'll thtand by the Thquire. More than that. Thith ith a prethiouth ratthcal and belongth to that bluthtering Cove that my people nearly pitht out o' winder. It'll be a dark night; I've got a horthie that'll do anything but thpeak; I've got a pony that'll go fifteen mile an hour with Childerth driving of him; I've got a dog that'll keep a man to one plathe four-and-twenty houth. Get a word with the young Thquire. Tell him when he theeth our horthie begin to danth, not to be afraid of being thpht, but to look out for a pony gig coming up. Tell him when he theeth that gig clothe by, to jump down, and it'll take him off at a rattling pathe. If my dog leth thith young man thtira peg or foot, I give him leave to go. And it my horthie ever thtirth from that thpot where he beginth a danthing, till the morning—I don't know him! Tharp'th the word!"

The word was so sharp that in ten minutes Mr. Childers, sauntering about the market place in a pair of slippers, had his eye, and Mr. Sleary's equipage was ready. It was a fine sight, to behold the learned dog barking round it, and Mr. Sleary instructing him with his one practicable eye, that Bitzer was the object of his particular attentions. Soon after dark they all three got in and started; the learned dog (a formidable creature) already pinning Bitzer with his eye, and sticking close to the wheel on his side, that he might be ready for him in the event of his showing the slightest disposition to alight.

The three sat up at the inn all night in great suspense; at eight o'clock in the morning Mr. Sleary and the dog re-appeared: both in high spirits.

"All right, Thquire!" said Mr. Sleary, "your thon may be aboard a thip by thith time. Childerth took him off, an hour and a half after we left latht night. The horthie danthed the Polka till he wath dead beat (he would have walthed if he hadn't been in harneth) and then I gave him the word and he went to thleep comfortable. Bitther thed he'd go for'ard and the dog hung on to hith neckhandercher with all four legth in the air, and pulled him down and rolled him over. Tho he come back into the drag, and there be that till I got the better of the athcident and turned the horthie'th head at half path thith morning."

Mr. Gradgrind overwhelmed him with thanks, of course, and hinted as delicately as he could, at a handsome remuneration in money.

"Well! I don't want money mythelf, Thquire; but Childerth ith a family man, and if you wath to like to offer him a five-pound note, it mightn't be unactheptable. Likewithe if you wath to thtand a collar for the dog, or a thet of bellth for the horthie, I should be very glad to take 'em. Brandy and water I alwayth take." He

had already called for a glass, and now called for another. "If you wouldn't think it going too far, Thquire, to make a little thpread for the company at about three and thix ahead, not reckoning Luth, it would make 'em happy."

All these little tokens of his gratitude, Mr. Gradgrind very willingly undertook to render. Though he thought them far too slight, he said, for such a service.

"Very well, Thquire; then if you'll only give a horthere-riding a bethpeak whenever you can, you'll more than balanth the account. Now, Thquire, if your daughter will exenthe me, I should like one parting word with you."

Louisa and Sissy withdrew into an adjoining room, and Mr. Sleary, stirring and drinking his brandy and water as he stood, went on:

"Thquire, you don't need to be told that dogth ith wonderful animalth."

"Their instinct" said Mr. Gradgrind, "is surprising."

"Whatever you call it—and I am bletht if I know what to call it," said Sleary, it ith, no doubt, athonithin. The way in which a dog'll find you—the distanth he'll come!"

"His scent," said Mr. Gradgrind, "being so fine."

"I'm bletht if I know what to call it," repeated Sleary, shaking his head. "But I have had dogth find me, Thquire, in a way that made me think whether that dog hadn't gone to another dog, and thed, 'You don't happen to know a perthon of the name of Thleary, do you? Perthon by the name of Thleary, in the Horthere-iding way—thtout man—game eye?' And whether that dog mightn't have thed, 'Well, I can't thay I know him mythelf, but I know a dog that I think would be likely to be acquainted with him.' And whether that dog mightn't have thought it over, and thed, 'Thleary, Thleary! O yeth, to be thure! A friend of mine lived with him at one time. I can get you hith addreth directly.' In consequenth of my being before the public, and going about tho muth, you thee, there mutht be a number of dogth acquainted with me, Thquire, that I don't know!"

Mr. Gradgrind seemed to be quite confounded by this speculation.

"Any way," said Sleary, after putting his lips to his brandy and water, "ith fourteen months ago, Thquire, thinth we wath at Chethter—and very good bithuith we wath doing. We wath getting up our Children in the Wood one morning, when there cometh into our Ring, by the thtarge door, a dog. He had travelled a long way, he wath in very bad condition, he wath lame, and pretty well blind. He went round to our children, one after another, as if he wath looking for a child he know'd, and then he come to me, and throwd himthelf up behind, and thtood on hith two fore-legth, weak ath he wath, and then he wagged hith tail and died. Thquire, that dog was Merry-legth."

"Sissy's father's dog!"

"Thethilia'th father'th old dog. Now,

I can take my oath, from my knowledge of that dog, that that man wath dead—and buried—afore that dog came back to me. Joth'phine and Childerth and me talked it over a long time, whether I should write or not. But we agreed 'No. There'th nothing comfortable to tell; why unthettle her mind, and make her unhappy?' Tho, whether her fathet detherted her, or whether he broke hith own heart alone, rather than pull her down along with him, never will be known, now, Thquire, till—not till we know how the dogth findth uth out."

"She keeps the bottle that he sent her for, to this hour; and she will believe in his affection to the last moment of her life," said Mr. Gradgrind.

"It theemth to prethent two thingth to a perthon, don't it, Thquire?" said Mr. Sleary, musing as he looked down into the depths of his brandy and water: "one that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelfintereth after all, but thomething very different; t'other, that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, whith thomehow or another ith at leatht ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith!"

Mr. Gradgrind looked out of the window, and made no reply. Mr. Sleary emptied his glass and recalled the ladies.

"Thethilia my dear, kith me and good bye! Mith Thquire, to thee you treating of her like a thithter, and a thithter that you thruth and honor with all your heart and more, ith a very pretty thight to me. I hope your brother may live to be better detherving of you, and a greater comfort to you. Thquire, thake handth firht and laht! Don't be croth with nth poor vagabondth. People mutht be amuthed. They can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working; they an't made for it. You mutht have nth, Thquire. Do the withe thing and the kind thing too, and make the betht of nth; not the wortht!"

"And I never thought before," said Mr. Sleary, putting his head in at the door again to say it, "that I wath tho muth of a Cackler!"

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

It is a dangerous thing to see anything in the sphere of a vain blusterer, before the vain blusterer sees it himself. Mr. Bounderby felt that Mrs. Sparsit had audaciously anticipated him, and presumed to be wiser than he. Inappeasably indignant with her for her triumphant discovery of Mrs. Pegler, he turned this presumption on the part of a woman in her dependent position over and over in his mind, until it accumulated with turning like a great snowball. At last he made the discovery that to discharge this highly connected female—to have it in his power to say, "She was a woman of family, and wanted to stick to me, but I wouldn't have it, and got rid of her," would be to get the utmost possible amount of crowning glory out of the connexion, and at the

same time to punish Mrs. Sparsit according to her deserts.

Filled fuller than ever, with this great idea, Mr. Bounderby came in to lunch, and sat himself down in the dining room of former days, where his portrait was. Mrs. Sparsit sat by the fire, with her foot in her cotton stirrup, little thinking whither she was posting.

Since the Pegler affair, this gentlewoman had covered her pity for Mr. Bounderby with a veil of quiet melancholy and contrition. In virtue thereof, it had become her habit to assume a woful look, which woful look she now bestowed upon her patron.

"What's the matter with you, ma'am?" said Mr. Bounderby in a very short, rough way.

"Pray, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, "do not bite my nose off."

"Bite your nose off, ma'am!" repeated Mr. Bounderby. "*Your nose!*" meaning, as Mrs. Sparsit conceived, that it was too developed a nose for the purpose. After which offensive implication he cut himself a crust of bread and threw the knife down with a noise.

Mrs. Sparsit took her foot out of the stirrup, and said, "Mr. Bounderby, sir!"

"Well, ma'am?" retorted Mr. Bounderby. "What are you staring at?"

"May I ask, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, "have you been ruffled this morning?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"May I inquire, sir," pursued the injured woman, "whether I am the unfortunate cause of your having lost your temper?"

"Now, I'll tell you what, ma'am," said Bounderby, "I am not come here to be bullied. A female may be highly connected, but she can not be permitted to bother and badger a man in my position, and I am not going to put up with it." (Mr. Bounderby felt it necessary to go on, foreseeing that if he allowed of details, he would be beaten.)

Mrs. Sparsit first elevated, then knitted her Coriolanian eyebrows; gathered up her work into its proper basket, and rose.

"Sir," said she, majestically. "It is apparent to me that I am in your way at present. I will retire to my own apartment."

"Allow me to open the door, ma'am."

"Thank you, sir; I can do it for myself."

"You had better allow me, ma'am," said Bounderby, passing her, and getting his hand upon the lock, "because I can take the opportunity of saying a word to you, before you go. Mrs. Sparsit, ma'am, I rather think you are cramped here, do you know? It appears to me that under my humble roof there's hardly opening enough for a lady of your genius in other people's affairs."

Mrs. Sparsit gave him a look of the darkest scorn, and said with great politeness, "Really, sir?"

"I have been thinking it over, you see, since the late affairs have happened, ma'am," said Bounderby, "and it appears to my poor judgment——"

"Oh! Pray, sir," Mrs. Sparsit interposed,

with sprightly cheerfulness, "don't disparage your judgment. Everybody knows how unerring Mr. Bounderby's judgment is. Everybody has had proofs of it. It must be the theme of general conversation. Disparage anything in yourself but your judgment, sir," said Mrs. Sparsit, laughing.

Mr. Bounderby, very red and uncomfortable, resumed:

"It appears to me, ma'am, I say, that a different sort of establishment altogether, would bring out a lady of *your* powers. Such an establishment as your relation, Lady Scadgers' now. Don't you think you might find some affairs there, ma'am, to interfere with?"

"It never occurred to me, before, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit, in a light, social style of conversation "but now you mention it, I should think it highly probable."

"Then suppose you try, ma'am," said Bounderby, laying an envelope with a cheque in it, in her little basket. "You can take your own time, for going, ma'am, but perhaps in the meanwhile, it will be more agreeable to a lady of your powers of mind, to eat her meals by herself, and not to be intruded upon. I really ought to apologize to you—being only Josiah Bounderby of Coketown—for having stood in your light so long."

"Pray don't name it, sir," returned Mrs. Sparsit. "If that portrait could speak, sir,—but it has the advantage over the original of not possessing the power of committing itself and disgusting others,—it would testify that a long period has elapsed since I first habitually addressed it as the picture of a Noodle. Nothing that a Noodle does, can awaken surprise or indignation; the proceedings of a Noodle can only inspire contempt."

Thus saying, Mrs. Sparsit, with her Roman features like a medal, struck to commemorate her scorn of Mr. Bounderby, surveyed him fixedly from head to foot, swept disdainfully past him, and ascended the staircase. Mr. Bounderby closed the door, and stood before the fire, projecting himself after his old explosive manner into his portrait—and into futurity.

Into how much of futurity? He saw Mrs. Sparsit fighting out a daily fight at the points of all the weapons in the female armory, with the grudging, smarting, peevish, tormenting Lady Scadgers, still laid up in bed with her mysterious leg, and gobbling her insufficient income down by about the middle of every quarter, in a mean little airless lodging, a mere closet for one, a mere crib for two, but did he see more? Did he catch any glimpse of himself making a show of Bitzer to strangers as the rising young man, so devoted to his master's great merits, who had now young Tom's place, and had almost captured young Tom himself, in the times when by various rascals he was spirited away? Did he see any faint reflection of his own image making a vain-glorious will, whereby five-and-twenty self-made men past fifty years of age, each taking upon himself



the name, Josiah Bounderby, of Coketown, should for ever dine in Bounderby Hall, for ever lodge in Bounderby Buildings, for ever attend a Bounderby chapel, for ever go to sleep under a Bounderby chaplain, for ever be supported out of a Bounderby estate, and for ever mausate all healthy stomachs with a vast amount of Bounderby bulderdash and bluster? Had he any prescience of that day, five years to come, when Josiah Bounderby, of Coketown, was to die of a fit in the Coketown street, and this same precious will was to begin its long career of quibble, plunder, false pretences, meanness, little service, and much care? Probably not. Yet the portrait was to see it all out.

Here was Mr. Gradgrind on the same day, and in the same hour, sitting thoughtful in his own room. How much of tuturity did *he* see? Did he see himself, a white-haired, decrepid man, bending his hitherto inflexible theories to appointed circumstances; making his facts and figures subservient to Faith, Hope, and Charity—and no longer trying to grind that heavenly trio in his dusty little mills? Did he catch sight of himself therefore much despised by his late political associates? Did he see them, in the era of its being quite settled that the national dustmen have only to do with one another, and owe no duty to an abstraction called a People, "taunting the honorable gentleman" with this and with that, and with what not, five nights a-week, until the small hours of the morning? Probably he had so much fore-knowledge, knowing his men.

Here was Louisa on the night of the same day, watching the fire as in days of yore: though with a gentler and a humbler face: How much of the future might arise before *her* vision? Broad-sides in the streets, signed with her father's name, exonerating the late Stephen Blackpool, weaver, from misplaced suspicion, and publishing the guilt of his own unhappy son, with such extenuation as his years and temptation (he could not bring himself to add, his education) might beseech; were of the Present. So, Stephen Blackpool's tombstone, with her father's record of his death, was almost of the Present, for she knew it was to be. These things she could plainly see. But how much of the Future?

A working woman, christened Rachael, after a long illness, once again appearing at the ringing of the factory bell, and passing to and

fro at the set hours among the Coketown hard's; a woman of a pensive beauty, always dressed in black, but sweet-tempered and serene, and even cheerful; a woman who, of all the people in the place, alone appeared to have compassion on a degraded, drunken wretch of her own sex, who was sometimes seen in the town secretly begging of her, and crying to her; a woman working, ever working, but content to do it, and preferring to do it as her natural lot, until she should be too old to labor any more! Did Louisa see this? Such a thing was to be.

A lonely brother, many thousands of miles away, writing on paper blotted with tears, that her words had soon come true, and that all the treasures in the world would be cheaply bartered for a sight of her dear face? At length, this brother coming nearer home, with hope of seeing her, and being delayed by illness; and then a letter in a strange hand, saying, he died in hospital, of fever, such a day, and died of penitence and love of you: his last word being your name? Did Louisa see these things?—Such things were to be.

Herself again a wife—a mother—lovingly watchful of her childrer, ever careful that they should have a childhood of the mind no less than a childhood of the body, as knowing it to be even a more beautiful thing, and any hoarded scrap of the former a blessing and happiness to the wisest? Did Louisa see this? Such a thing was never to be.

But happy Sissy's happy children loving her; all children loving her; she, grown learned in childish lore; thinking no innocent and pretty fancy ever to be despised; trying hard to know her humble fellow-creatures; and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with these imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up, the sturdiest physical manhood will be morally stark death, and the plainest national prosperity figures can show will be the Writing on the Wall; she holding this course as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress, or fancy fair; but as a duty to be done—did Louisa see these things of herself? These things were to be!

Dear reader! It rests with you and me whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be. We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires turn gray and cold.

# LIZZIE LEIGH.

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## CHAPTER I.

WHEN Death is present in a household on a Christmas Day, the very contrast between the time as it now is, and the day as it has often been, gives a poignancy to sorrow,—a more utter blankness to the desolation. James Leigh died just as the far away bells of Rochdale Church were ringing for morning service on Christmas Day, 1836. A few minutes before his death, he opened his already glazing eyes, and made a sign to his wife, by the faint motion of his lips, that he had yet something to say. She stooped close down, and caught the broken whisper, "I forgive her, Anne! May God forgive me."

"Oh my love, my dear! only get well, and I will never cease showing my thanks for those words. May God in heaven bless thee for saying them. Thou'rt not so restless, my lad! may be—Oh God!"

For even while she spoke, he died.

They had been two-and-twenty years man and wife; for nineteen of those years their life had been as calm and happy, as the most perfect uprightness on the one side, and the most complete confidence and loving submission on the other, could make it. Milton's famous line might have been framed and hung up as the rule of their married life, for he was truly the interpreter, who stood between God and her; she would have considered herself wicked if she had ever dared even to think him austere, though as certainly as he was an upright man, so surely was he hard, stern, and inflexible. But for three years the moan and the murmur had never been out of her heart, she had rebelled against her husband as against a tyrant, with a hidden sullen rebellion, which tore up the old land-marks of wifely duty and affection, and poisoned the fountains whence gentlest love and reverence had once been for ever springing.

But those last blessed words replaced him on his throne in her heart, and called out penitent anguish for all the bitter estrangement of later years. It was this which made

her refuse all the entreaties of her sons, that she would see the kind-hearted neighbors, who called on their way from church, to sympathise and condole. No! she would stay with the dead husband that had spoken tenderly at last, if for three years he had kept silence; who knew but what, if she had only been more gentle and less angrily reserved he might have relented earlier—and in time!

She sat rocking herself to and fro by the side of the bed, while the footsteps below went in and out; she had been in sorrow too long to have any violent burst of deep grief now; the furrows were well worn in her cheeks, and the tears flowed quietly, if incessantly, all the day long. But when the winter's night drew on, and the neighbors had gone away to their homes, she stole to the window, and gazed out, long and wistfully, over the dark gray moors. She did not hear her son's voice, as he spoke to her from the door, nor his footstep as he drew nearer. She started when he touched her.

"Mother! come down to us. There's no one but Will and me. Dearest mother, we do so want you." The poor lad's voice trembled, and he began to cry. It appeared to require an effort on Mrs. Leigh's part to tear herself away from the window, but with a sigh she complied with his request.

The two boys (for though Will was nearly twenty-one, she still thought of him as a lad) had done everything in their power to make the house-place comfortable for her. She herself, in the old days before her sorrow, had never made a brighter fire or a cleaner hearth, ready for her husband's return home, than now awaited her. The tea-things were all put out, and the kettle was boiling; and the boys had calmed their grief down into a kind of sober cheerfulness. They paid her every attention they could think of, but received little notice on her part; she did not resist—she rather submitted to all their arrangements; but they did not seem to touch her heart.

When tea was ended,—it was merely the  
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form of tea that had been gone through,—Will moved the things away to the dresser. His mother leant back languidly in her chair.

"Mother, shall Tom read you a chapter? He's a better scholar than I."

"Aye, lad!" said she, almost eagerly. "That's it. Read me the Prodigal Son. Aye, aye, lad. Thank thee."

Tom found the chapter, and read it in the high-pitched voice which is customary in village schools. His mother bent forward, her lips parted, her eyes dilated; her whole body instinct with eager attention. Will sat with his head depressed and hung down. He knew why that chapter had been chosen, and to him it recalled the family's disgrace. When the reading was ended, he still hung down his head in gloomy silence. But her face was brighter than it had been before for the day. Her eyes looked dreamy, as if she saw a vision; and by and by she pulled the Bible towards her, and putting her finger underneath each word, began to read them aloud in a low voice to herself; she read again the words of bitter sorrow and deep humiliation; but most of all she paused and brightened over the father's tender reception of the repentant prodigal.

So passed the Christmas evening in the Upclose Farm.

The snow had fallen heavily over the dark waving moorland, before the day of the funeral. The black, storm-laden dome of heaven lay very still and close upon the white earth, as they carried the body forth out of the house which had known his presence so long as its ruling power. Two and two the mourners followed, making a black procession, in their winding march over the unbeaten snow, to Milne-Row Church—now lost in some hollow of the bleak moors, now slowly climbing the heaving ascents. There was no long tarrying after the funeral, for many of the neighbors who accompanied the body to the grave had far to go, and the great white flakes which came slowly down, were the boding fore-runners of a heavy storm. One old friend alone accompanied the widow and her sons to their home.

The Upclose Farm had belonged for generations to the Leighs; and yet its possession hardly raised them above the rank of laborers. There was the house and out-buildings, all of an old-fashioned kind, and about seven acres of barren unproductive land, which they had never possessed capital enough to improve; indeed they could hardly rely upon it for subsistence; and it had been customary to bring up the sons to some trade—such as a wheelwright's or blacksmith's.

James Leigh had left a will, in the possession of the old man who accompanied them home. He read it aloud. James had bequeathed the farm to his faithful wife,

Anne Leigh, for her life-time; and afterwards, to his son William. The hundred and odd pounds in the savings' bank was to accumulate for Thomas.

After the reading was ended, Anne Leigh sat silent for a time; and then she asked to speak to Samuel Orme alone. The sons went into the back kitchen, and thence strolled out into the fields, regardless of the driving snow. The brothers were dearly fond of each other, although they were very different in character. Will, the elder, was like his father, stern, reserved, and scrupulously upright. Tom (who was ten years younger) was gentle and delicate as a girl, both in appearance and character. He had always clung to his mother, and dreaded his father. They did not speak as they walked, for they were only in the habit of talking about facts, and hardly knew the more sophisticated language applied to the description of feelings.

Meanwhile their mother had taken hold of Samuel Orme's arm with her trembling hand.

"Samuel, I must let the farm—I must."

"Let the farm! What's come o'er the woman?"

"Oh, Samuel!" said she, her eyes swimming in tears, "I'm just fain to go and live in Manchester. I mun let the farm."

Samuel looked, and pondered, but did not speak for some time. At last he said—

"If thou hast made up thy mind, there's no speaking again it; and thou must e'en go. Thou'lt be sadly potted wi' Manchester ways; but that's not my look out. Why, thou'lt have to buy potatoes, a thing thou hast never done afore in all thy born life. Well! it's not my look out. Its rather for me than again me. Our Jenny is going to be married to Tom Higginbotham, and he was speaking of wanting a bit of land to begin upon. His father will be dying sometime, I reckon, and then he'll step into the Croft Farm. But meanwhile—"

"Then thou'lt let the farm," said she, still as eagerly as ever.

"Aye, aye, he'll take it fast enough, I've a notion. But I'll not drive a bargain with thee just now; it would not be right; we'll wait a bit."

"No; I cannot wait, settle it out at once."

"Well, well; I'll speak to Will about it. I see him out yonder. I'll step to him, and talk it over."

Accordingly he went and joined the two lads, and without more ado, began the subject to them.

"Will, thy mother is fain to go live in Manchester, and covets to let the farm. Now, I'm willing to take it for Tom Higginbotham; but I like to drive a keen bargain, and there would be no fun chaffering with thy mother just now. Let thee and me buckle to, my lad! and try and cheat each other; it will warm us this cold day."



"Let the farm!" said both the lads at once, with infinite surprise. "Go live in Manchester!"

When Samuel Orme found that the plan had never before been named to either Will or Tom, he would have nothing to do with it, he said, until they had spoken to their mother; likely she was "dazed" by her husband's death; he would wait a day or two, and not name it to any one; not to Tom Higginbotham himself, or maybe he would set his heart upon it. The lads had better go in and talk it over with their mother. He bade them good day and left them.

Will looked very gloomy, but he did not speak till they got near the house. Then he said—

"Tom, go to th' shippon, and supper the cows. I want to speak to mother alone."

When he entered the house-place, she was sitting before the fire, looking into its embers. She did not hear him come in; for some time she had lost her quick perception of outward things.

"Mother! what's this about going to Manchester?" asked he.

"Oh, lad!" said she, turning round, and speaking in a beseeching tone, "I must go and seek our Lizzie. I cannot rest here for thinking on her. Many's the time I have left thy father sleeping in bed, and stole to th' window, and looked and looked my heart out towards Manchester, till I thought I must just set out and tramp over moor and moss straight away till I got there, and then lift up every down-east face till I came to our Lizzie. And often, when the south wind was blowing soft among the hollows, I've fancied (it could but be fancy, thou knowest) I heard her crying upon me; and I've thought the voice came closer and closer, till at last it was sobbing out 'Mother' close to the door; and I've stolen down, and undone the latch before now, and looked out into the still black night, thinking to see her, —and turned sick and sorrowful when I heard no living sound but the sough of the wind dying away. Oh! speak not to me of stopping here, when she may be perishing for hunger, like the poor lad in the parable! And now she lifted up her voice and wept aloud."

Will was deeply grieved. He had been old enough to be told the family shame when, more than two years before, his father had had his letter to his daughter returned by her mistress in Manchester, telling him that Lizzie had left her service some time—and why. He had sympathised with his father's stern anger; though he had thought him something hard, it is true, when he had forbidden his weeping, heart-broken wife to go and try to find her poor sinning child, and declared that henceforth they would have no daughter; that she should be as one dead, and her name never

more be named at market or at meal time, in blessing or in prayer. He had held his peace, with compressed lips and contracted brow, when the neighbors had noticed to him how poor Lizzie's death had aged both his father and his mother; and how they thought the bereaved couple would never hold up their heads again. He himself had felt as if that one event had made him old before his time; and had envied Tom the tears he had shed over poor, pretty, innocent, dead Lizzie. He thought about her sometimes, till he ground his teeth together, and could have struck her down in her shame. His mother had never named her to him until now.

"Mother!" said he, at last. "She may be dead. Most likely she is."

"No, Will; she is not dead," said Mrs. Leigh. "God will not let her die till I've seen her once again. Thou dost not know how I've prayed and prayed just once again to see her sweet face, and tell her I've forgiven her though she's broken my heart—she has, Will." She could not go on for a minute or two for the choking sobs. "Thou dost not know that, or thou wouldst not say she could be dead,—for God is very merciful, Will; He is,—He is much more pitiful than man,—I could never ha' spoken to thy father as I did to Him,—and yet thy father forgave her at last. The last words he said were that he forgave her. Thou'lt not be harder than thy father, Will? Do not try and hinder me going to seek her, for it's no use."

Will sat very still for a long while before he spoke. At last he said, "I'll not hinder you. I think she's dead, but that's no matter."

"She is not dead," said his mother, with low earnestness. Will took no notice of the interruption.

"We will all go to Manchester for a twelvemonth, and let the farm to Tom Higginbotham. I'll get blacksmith's work: and Tom can have good schooling for awhile, which he's always craving for. At the end of the year you'll come back, mother, and give over fretting for Lizzie, and think with me that she is dead,—and to my mind, that would be more comfort than to think of her living;" he dropped his voice as he spoke these last words. She shook her head, but made no answer. He asked again—

"Will you, mother, agree to this?"

"I'll agree to it a-this-ns," said she. "If I hear and see nought of her for a twelvemonth, me being in Manchester looking out, I'll just ha' broken my heart fairly before the year's ended, and then I shall know neither love nor sorrow for her any more, when I'm at rest in the grave—I'll agree to that, Will."

"Well, I suppose it must be so. I shall not tell Tom, mother, why we're flitting to Manchester. Best spare him."

"As thou wilt," said she, sadly, "so that we go, that's all."

Before the wild daffodils were in flower in the sheltered copses round Upclose Farm, the Leighs were settled in their Manchester home; if they could ever grow to consider that place as a home, where there was no garden, or outbuilding, no fresh breezy outlet, no far-stretching view, over moor and hollow,—no dumb animals to be tended, and, what more than all they missed, no old haunting memories, even though those remembrances told of sorrow, and the dead and gone.

Mrs. Leigh heeded the loss of all these things less than her sons. She had more spirit in her countenance than she had had for months, because now she had hope; of a sad enough kind, to be sure, but still it was hope. She performed all her household duties, strange and complicated as they were, and bewildered as she was with all the town-necessities of her new manner of life; but when her house was "sided," and the boys came home from their work, in the evening, she would put on her things and steal out, unnoticed, as she thought, but not without many a heavy sigh from Will, after she had closed the house-door and departed. It was often past midnight before she came back, pale and weary, with almost a guilty look upon her face; but that face so full of disappointment and hope-deferred, that Will had never the heart to say what he thought of the folly and hopelessness of the search. Night after night it was renewed, till days grew to weeks, and weeks to months. All this time Will did his duty towards her as well as he could, without having sympathy with her. He staid at home in the evenings for Tom's sake, and often wished he had Tom's pleasure in reading, for the time hung heavy on his hands, as he sat up for his mother.

I need not tell you how the mother spent the weary hours. And yet I will tell you something. She used to wander out, at first as if without a purpose, till she rallied her thoughts, and brought all her energies to bear on the one point; then she went with earnest patience along the least known ways to some new part of the town, looking wistfully with dumb entreaty into people's faces; sometimes catching a glimpse of a figure which had a kind of momentary likeness to her child's, and following that figure with never wearying perseverance till some light from shop or lamp showed the cold strange face which was not her daughter's. Once or twice a kind-hearted passer-by, struck by her look of yearning woe, turned back and offered help, or asked her what she wanted. When so spoken to, she answered only, 'You don't know a poor girl they call Lizzie Leigh, do you?' and when they denied all knowledge, she shook her

head, and went on again. I think they believed her to be crazy. But she never spoke first to any one. She sometimes took a few minutes' rest on the doorsteps, and sometimes (very seldom) covered her face and cried; but she could not afford to lose time and chances in this way; while her eyes were blinded with tears, the lost one might pass by unseen.

One evening, in the rich time of shortening autumn-days, Will saw an old man, who without being absolutely drunk, could not guide himself rightly along the foot-path, and was mocked for his unsteadiness of gait by the idle boys of the neighborhood. For his father's sake Will regarded old age with tenderness, even when most degraded and removed from the stern virtues which dignified that father; so he took the old man home, and seemed to believe his often repeated assertions that he drank nothing but water. The stranger tried to stiffen himself up into steadiness as he drew nearer home, as if there were some one there, for whose respect he cared even in his half-intoxicated state, or whose feelings he feared to grieve. His home was exquisitely clean and neat even in outside appearance; threshold, window, and window-sill, were outward signs of some spirit of purity within. Will was rewarded for his attention by a bright glance of thanks, succeeded by a blush of shame, from a young woman of twenty or thereabouts. She did not speak, or second her father's hospitable invitations to him to be seated. She seemed unwilling that a stranger should witness her father's attempts at stately sobriety, and Will could not bear to stay and see her distress. But when the old man, with many a flabby shake of the hand, kept asking him to come again some other evening and see them, Will sought her downcast eyes, and, though he could not read their veiled meaning, he answered timidly, "If it agreeable to everybody, I'll come—and thank ye." But there was no answer from the girl to whom this speech was in reality addressed; and Will left the house liking her all the better for never speaking.

He thought about her a great deal for the next day or two; he scolded himself for being so foolish as to think of her, and then fell to with fresh vigor, and thought of her more than ever. He tried to depreciate her; he told himself she was not pretty, and then made indignant answer that he liked her looks much better than any beauty of them all. He wished he was not so country looking, so red-faced, so broad-shouldered; while she was like a lady, with her smooth colorless complexion, her bright dark hair and her spotless dress. Pretty, or not pretty, she drew his footsteps towards her; he could not resist the impulse that made him wish to see her once more, and find out some fault which should unloose his heart from her

unconscious keeping. But there she was, pure and maidenly as before. He sat and looked, answering her father at cross purposes, while she drew more and more into the shadow of the chimney-corner out of sight. Then the spirit that possessed him (it was not he himself, sure, that did so impudent a thing!) made him get up and carry the candle to a different place, under the pretence of giving her more light at her sewing, but in reality, to be able to see her better; she could not stand this much longer, but jumped up, and said she must put her little niece to bed; and surely, there never was, before or since, so troublesome a child of two years old; for, though Will staid an hour and a half longer, she never came down again. He won the father's heart, though, by his capacity as a listener, for some people are not at all particular, and, so that they themselves may talk on undisturbed, are not so unreasonable as to expect attention to what they say.

Will did gather this much, however, from the old man's talk. He had once been quite in a genteel line of business, but had failed for more money than any greengrocer he had heard of; at least, any who did not mix up fish and game with greengrocery proper. This grand failure seemed to have been the event of his life, and one on which he dwelt with a strange kind of pride. It appeared as if at present he rested from his past exertions (in the bankrupt line), and depended on his daughter, who kept a small school for very young children. But all these particulars Will only remembered and understood, when he had left the house; at the time he heard them, he was thinking of Susan. After he had made good his footing at Mr. Palmer's he was not long, you may be sure, without finding some reason for returning again and again. He listened to her father, he talked to the little niece, but he looked at Susan, both while he listened and while he talked. Her father kept on insisting on his former gentility, the details of which would have appeared very questionable to Will's mind, if the sweet, delicate, modest Susan had not thrown an inexplicable air of refinement over all she came near. She never spoke much; she was generally diligently at work; but when she moved it was so noiselessly, and when she did speak, it was in so low and soft a voice, that silence, speech, motion and stillness, alike seemed to remove her high above Will's reach into some saintly and inaccessible air of glory—high above his reach, even as she knew him! And, if she were made acquainted with the dark secret behind, of his sister's shame, which was kept ever present to his mind by his mother's nightly search among the outcast and forsaken, would not Susan shrink away from him with loathing, as if he were tainted by the involuntary relationship?

This was his dread; and thereupon followed a resolution that he would withdraw from her sweet company before it was too late. So he resisted internal temptation, and staid at home, and suffered and sighed. He became angry with his mother for her untiring patience in seeking for one who, he could not help hoping, was dead rather than alive. He spoke sharply to her, and received only such sad deprecatory answers as made him reproach himself, and still more lose sight of peace of mind. This struggle could not last long without affecting his health; and Tom, his sole companion through the long evenings, noticed his increasing languor, his restless irritability, with perplexed anxiety, and at last resolved to call his mother's attention to his brother's haggard, care-worn looks. She listened with a startled recollection of Will's claims upon her love. She noticed his decreasing appetite, and half-checked sighs.

"Will, lad! what's come o'er thee?" said she to him, as he sat listlessly gazing into the fire.

"There's nought the matter with me," said he, as if annoyed at her remark.

"Nay, lad, but there is." He did not speak again to contradict her; indeed she did not know if he had heard her, so unmoved did he look.

"Would'st like to go back to Upclose Farm?" asked she, sorrowfully.

"It's just blackberrying time," said Tom.

Will shook his head. She looked at him awhile, as if trying to read that expression of despondency and trace it back to its source.

"Will and Tom could go," said she; "I must stay here till I've found her, thou know'st," continued she, dropping her voice.

He turned quickly round, and with the authority he at all times exercised over Tom, bade him begone to bed.

When Tom had left the room, he prepared to speak.

## CHAPTER II.

"MOTHER," then said Will, "why will you keep on thinking she's alive? If she were but dead, we need never name her name again. We've never heard nought on her since father wrote her that letter; we never knew whether she got it or not. She'd left her place before then. Many a one dies is—"

"Oh my lad! dunnot speak so to me, or my heart will break outright," said his mother, with a sort of cry. Then she calmed herself, for she yearned to persuade him to her own belief. "Thou never asked, and thou'rt too like thy father for me to tell without asking—but it were all to be near Lizzie's old place



that I settled down on this side o' Manchester; and the very day after we came, I went to her old missus, and asked to speak a word w<sup>i</sup> her. I had a strong mind to cast it up to her, that she should ha' sent my poor lass away without telling on it to us first; but she were in black, and looked so sad I could na' find in my heart to threep it up. But I did ask her a bit about our Lizzie. The master would have her turned away at a day's warning, (he's gone to t'other place; I hope he'll meet w<sup>i</sup> more mercy there than he showed our Lizzie,—I do,—) and when the missus asked her should she write to us, she says Lizzie shook her head; and when she speered at her again, the poor lass went down on her knees, and begged her not, for she said it would break my heart (as it has done, Will—God knows it has),” and the poor mother, choking with her struggle to keep down her hard overmastering grief, “and her father would curse her—Oh, God, teach me to be patient.” She could not speak for a few minutes,—“and the lass threatened, and said she'd go drown herself in the canal, if the missus wrote home—and so—

“Well! I'd got a trace of my child,—the missus thought she'd gone to the workhouse to be nursed; and there I went—and there, sure enough, she had been,—and they'd turned her out as soon as she was strong, and told her she were young enough to work,—but whatten kind o' work would be open to her, lad, and her baby to keep?”

Will listened to his mother's tale with deep sympathy, not unmixed with the old bitter shame. But the opening of her heart had unlocked his, and after a while he spoke.

“Mother! I think I'd e'en better go home. Tom can stay w<sup>i</sup> thee. I know I should stay too, but I cannot stay in peace so near—her—without craving to see her—Susan Palmer I mean.”

“Has the old Mr. Palmer thou telled me on a daughter?” asked Mrs. Leigh.

“Aye, he has. And I love her above a bit. And it's because I love her I want to leave Manchester. That's all.”

Mrs. Leigh tried to understand this speech for some time, but found it difficult of interpretation.

“Why wouldn't thou not tell her thou lov'st her? Thou'rt a likely lad, and sure o' work. Thou'lt have Upclose at my death; and as for that I could let thee have it now, and keep myself by doing a bit of charring. It seems to me a very backward sort o' way of winning her to think of leaving Manchester.”

“Oh, mother, she's so gentle and so good,—she's downright holy. She's never known a touch of sin; and can I ask her to marry me, knowing what we do about Lizzie, and fearing worse! I doubt if one like her could

ever care for me; but if she knew about my sister, it would put a gulf between us, and she'd shudder up at the thought of crossing it. You don't know how good she is, mother!”

“Will, Will! if she's so good as thou say'st, she'll have pity on such as my Lizzie. If she has no pity for such, she's a cruel Pharisee, and thou'rt best without her.”

But he only shook his head, and sighed; and for the time the conversation dropped.

But a new idea sprang up in Mrs. Leigh's head. She thought that she would go and see Susan Palmer, and speak up for Will, and tell her the truth about Lizzie; and according to her pity for the poor sinner, would she be worthy or unworthy of him. She resolved to go the very next afternoon, but without telling any one of her plan. Accordingly she looked out the Sunday clothes she had never before had the heart to unpack since she came to Manchester, but which she now desired to appear in, in order to do credit to Will. She put on her old-fashioned black mode bonnet, trimmed with real lace; her scarlet cloth cloak, which she had had ever since she was married; and always spotlessly clean, she set forth on her unauthorized embassy. She knew the Palmers lived in Crown Street, though where she had heard it she could not tell; and modestly asking her way, she arrived in the street about a quarter to four o'clock. She stopped to inquire the exact number, and the woman whom she addressed told her that Susan Palmer's school would not be loosed till four, and asked her to stop in and wait until then at her house.

“For,” said she, smiling, “them that wants Susan Palmer wants a kind friend of ours; so we, in a manner, call cousins. Sit down, missus, sit down. I'll wipe the chair, so that it shanna dirty your cloak. My mother used to wear them bright cloaks, and they're right gradely things again a green field.

“Hav ye known Susan Palmer long?” asked Mrs. Leigh, pleased with the admiration of her cloak.

“Ever since they comed to live in our street. Our Sally goes to her school.”

“Whatten sort of a lass is she, for I ha' never seen her?”

“Well,—as for looks, I cannot say. It's so long since I first knowed her, that I've clean forgotten what I thought of her then. My master says he never saw such a smile for gladdening the heart. But may be it's not looks you're asking about. The best thing I can say of her looks is, that she's just one a stranger would stop in the street to ask help from if he needed it. All the little childer creeps as close as they can to her; she'll have as many as three or four hanging to her apron all at once.”

"Is she cocket at all?"

"Cocket, bless you! you never saw a creature less set up in all your life. Her father's cocket enough. No! she's not cocket any way. You've not heard much of Susan Palmer, I reckon, if you think she's cocket. She's just one to come quietly in, and do the very thing most wanted; little things, maybe, that any one could do, but that few would think on, for another. She'll bring her thimble wi' her, and mend up after the childer o' nights,—and she writes all Betty Harker's letters to her grandchild out at service,—and she's in nobody's way, and that's a great matter, I take it. Here's the childer running past! School is loosed. You'll find her now, missus, ready to hear and to help. But we none on us frab her by going near her in school-time."

Poor Mrs. Leigh's heart began to beat, and she could almost have turned round and gone home again. Her country breeding had made her shy of strangers, and this Susan Palmer appeared to her like a real born lady by all accounts. So she knocked with a timid feeling at the indicated door, and when it was opened, dropped a simple curtsy without speaking. Susan had her little niece in her arms, curled up with fond endearment against her breast, but she put her gently down to the ground, and instantly placed a chair in the best corner of the room for Mrs. Leigh, when she told her who she was. "It's not Will as has asked me to come," said the mother, apologetically; "I'd a wish just to speak to you myself!"

Susan colored up to her temples, and stooped to pick up the little toddling girl. In a minute or two Mrs. Leigh began again.

"Will thinks you would na respect us if you knew all; but I think you could na help feeling for us in the sorrow God has put upon us; so I just put on my bonnet, and came off unknownst to the lads. Every one says you're very good, and that the Lord has keeped you from falling from his ways; but maybe you've never yet been tried and tempted as some is. I'm perhaps speaking too plain, but my heart's welly broken, and I can't be choice in my words as them who are happy can. Well now! I'll tell you the truth. Will dreads you to hear it, but I'll just tell it you. You mun know,"—but here the poor woman's words failed her, and she could do nothing but sit rocking herself backwards and forwards, with sad eyes, straight-gazing into Susan's face, as if they tried to tell the tale of agony which the quivering lips refused to utter. Those wretched stony eyes forced the tears down Susan's cheeks, and, as if this sympathy gave the mother strength, she went on in a low voice, "I had a daughter once, my heart's darling. Her father thought I made too much on her, and that she'd grow marred staying at home; so he said she

mun go among strangers, and learn to rough it. She were young, and liked the thought of seeing a bit of the world; and her father heard on a place in Manchester. Well! I'll not weary you. That poor girl were led astray; and first thing we heard on it, was when a letter of her father's was sent back by her missus, saying, she'd left her place, or, to speak right, the master had turned her into the street soon as he had heard of her condition—and she not seventeen!"

She now cried aloud; and Susan wept too. The little child looked up into their faces, and, catching their sorrow, began to whimper and wail. Susan took it softly up, and hiding her face in its little neck, tried to restrain her tears, and think of comfort for the mother. At last she said:—

"Where is she now?"

"Lass! I dunnot know," said Mrs. Leigh, checking her sobs to communicate this addition to her distress. "Mrs. Lomax telled me she went"—

"Mrs. Lomax—what Mrs. Lomax?"

"Her as lives in Brabazon-street. She telled me my poor wench went to the work-house fra there. I'll not speak again the dead; but if her father would but ha' letten me,—but he were one who had no notion—no, I'll not say that; best say nought. He forgave her on his death-bed. I dare say I did na go th' right way to work."

"Will you hold the child for me one instant?" said Susan.

"Ay, if it will come to me. Childer used to be fond on me till I got the sad look on my face that scares them, I think."

But the little girl clung to Susan; so she carried it up stairs with her. Mrs. Leigh sat by herself—how long she did not know.

Susan came down with a bundle of far-worn baby-clothes.

"You must listen to me a bit, and not think too much about what I'm going to tell you. Nanny is not my niece, nor any kin to me that I know of. I used to go out working by the day. One night, as I came home, I thought some woman was following me; I turned to look. The woman, before I could see her face (for she turned it to one side), offered me something. I held out my arms by instinct; she dropped a bundle into them with a bursting sob that went straight to my heart. It was a baby. I looked round again; but the woman was gone. She had run away as quick as lightning. There was a little packet of clothes—very few—and as if they were made out of its mother's gowns, for they were large patterns to buy for a baby. I was always fond of babies; and I had not my wits about me, father says; for it was very cold, and when I'd seen as well as I could (for it was past ten) that there was no one in the street, I brought it in and warmed it. Father was very angry when he came, and said he'd

take it to the workhouse the next morning, and flyted me sadly about it. But when morning came I could not bear to part with it; it had slept in my arms all night; and I've heard what workhouse bringing up is. So I told father I'd give up going out working, and stay at home and keep school, if I might only keep the baby; and after awhile, he said if I earned enough for him to have his comforts, he'd let me; but he's never taken to her. Now, don't tremble so—I've but a little more to tell—and maybe I'm wrong in telling it; but I used to work next door to Mrs. Lomax's, in Brabazon-street, and the servants were all thick together; and I heard about Bessy (they called her) being sent away. I don't know that ever I saw her; but the time would be about fitting to this child's age, and I've sometimes fancied it was her's. And now, will you look at the little clothes that came with her—bless her!"

But Mrs. Leigh had fainted. The strange joy and shame, and gushing love for the little child had overpowered her; it was some time before Susan could bring her round. Then she was all trembling, sick with impatience to look at the little frocks. Among them was a slip of paper which Susan had forgotten to name, that had been pinned to the bundle. On it was scrawled in a round stiff hand,

"Call her Anne. She does not cry much, and takes a deal of notice. God bless you and forgive me."

The writing was no clue at all; the name "Anne," common though it was, seemed something to build upon. But Mrs. Leigh recognized one of the frocks instantly, as being made out of part of a gown that she and her daughter had bought together in Rochdale.

She stood up, and stretched out her hands in the attitude of blessing over Susan's bent head.

"God bless you, and show you His mercy in your need, as you have shown it to this little child."

She took the little creature in her arms, and smoothed away her sad looks into a smile, and kissed it fondly, saying over and over again, "Nanny, Nanny, my little Nanny." At last the child was soothed, and looked in her face and smiled back again.

"It has her eyes," said she to Susan.

"I never saw her to the best of my knowledge. I think it must be her's by the frock. But where can she be?"

"God knows," said Mrs. Leigh; "I dare not think she's dead. I'm sure she isn't."

"No! she's not dead. Every now and then a little packet is thrust in under our door, with may-be two half-crowns in it; once it was half-a-sovereign. Altogether I've got seven-and-thirty shillings wrapped up for Nanny. I never touch it, but I've

often thought the poor mother feels near to God when she brings this money. Father wanted to set the policeman to watch, but I said No, for I was afraid if she was watched she might not come, and it seemed such a holy thing to be checking her in, I could not find in my heart to do it."

"Oh, if we could but find her! I'd take her in my arms, and we'd just lie down and die together."

"Nay, don't speak so!" said Susan gently, "for all that's come and gone, she may turn right at last. Mary Magdalen did, you know."

"Eh! but I were nearer right about thee than Will. He thought you would never look on him again if you knew about Lizzie. But thou'rt not a Pharisee."

"I'm sorry he thought I could be so hard," said Susan in a low voice, and coloring up. Then Mrs. Leigh was alarmed, and in her motherly anxiety, she began to fear lest she had injured Will in Susan's estimation.

"You see Will thinks so much of you—gold would not be good enough for you to walk on, in his eye. He said you'd never look at him as he was, let alone his being brother to my poor wench. He loves you so, it makes him think meanly on everything belonging to himself, as not fit to come near ye,—but he's a good lad, and a good son—thou'lt be a happy woman if thou'lt have him,—so don't let my words go against him; don't."

But Susan hung her head and made no answer. She had not known until now, that Will thought so earnestly and seriously about her; and even now she felt afraid that Mrs. Leigh's words promised her too much happiness, and that they could not be true. At any rate the instinct of modesty made her shrink from saying anything which might seem like a confession of her own feelings to a third person. Accordingly she turned the conversation on the child.

"I'm sure he could not help loving Nanny," said she. "There never was such a good little darling; don't you think she'd win his heart if he knew she was his niece, and perhaps bring him to think kindly on his sister?"

"I dunnot know," said Mrs. Leigh shaking her head. "He has a turn in his eye like his father, that makes me—. He's right down good though. But you see I've never been a good one at managing folks; one severe look turns me sick, and then I say just the wrong thing, I'm so fluttered. Now I should like nothing better than to take Nancy home with me, but Tom knows nothing but that his sister is dead, and I've not the knack of speaking rightly to Will. I dare not do it, and that's the truth. But you mun not think badly of Will. He's so good hisself, that he can't understand how



any one can do wrong; and, above all, I'm sure he loves you dearly."

"I don't think I could part with Nanny," said Susan, anxious to stop this revelation of Will's attachment to herself. "He'll come round to her soon; he can't fail; and I'll keep a sharp look-out after the poor mother, and try and catch her the next time she comes with her little parcel of money."

"Aye, lass! we mun get hold of her; my Lizzie. I love thee dearly for thy kindness to her child; but, if thou canst catch her for me, I'll pray for thee when I'm too near my death to speak words; and while I live, I'll serve thee next to her,—she mun come first, thou knowst. God bless thee, lass. My heart is lighter by a deal than it was when I comed in. Them lads will be looking for me home, and I mun go, and leave this little sweet one," kissing it. "If I can take courage, I'll tell Will all that has come and gone between us two. He may come and see thee, maynt he!"

"Father will be very glad to see him, I'm sure," replied Susan. The way in which this was spoken satisfied Mrs. Leigh's anxious heart that she had done Will no harm by what she had said; and with many a kiss to the little one, and one more fervent tearful blessing on Susan, she went homewards.

### CHAPTER III.

THAT night Mrs. Leigh stopped at home; that only night for many months. Even Tom, the scholar, looked up from his books in amazement; but then he remembered that Will had not been well, and that his mother's attention having been called to the circumstance, it was only natural she should stay to watch him. And no watching could be more tender, or more complete. Her loving eyes seemed never averted from his face; his grave, sad, care-worn face. When Tom went to bed the mother left her seat, and going up to Will where he sat looking at the fire, but not seeing it, she kissed his forehead, and said,

"Will! lad, I've been to see Susan Palmer!"

She felt the start under her hand which was placed on his shoulder, but he was silent for a minute or two. Then he said,

"What took you there, mother?"

"Why, my lad, it was likely I should wish to see one you cared for; I did not put myself forward. I put on my Sunday clothes, and tried to behave as yo'd ha liked me. At least I remember trying at first; but after, I forgot all."

She rather wished that he would question her as to what made her forget all. But he only said,

"How was she looking, mother?"

"Will, thou seest I never set eyes on her before; but she's a good, gentle looking creature; and I love her dearly, as I've reason to."

Will looked up with momentary surprise; for his mother was too shy to be usually taken with strangers. But after all it was natural in this case, for who could look at Susan without loving her? So still he did not ask any questions, and his poor mother had to take courage, and try again to introduce the subject near to her heart. But how?

"Will!" said she (jerking it out, in sudden despair of her own powers to lead to what she wanted to say), "I telled her all."

"Mother! you've ruined me," said he, standing up, and standing opposite to her with a stern white look of affright on his face.

"No! my own dear lad; dunnot look so scared, I have not ruined you!" she exclaimed, placing her two hands on his shoulders and looking fondly into his face. "She's not one to harden her heart against a mother's sorrow. My own lad, she's too good for that. She's not one to judge and scorn the sinner. She's too deep read in her New Testament for that. Take courage, Will; and thou mayst, for I watched her well, though it is not for one woman to let out another's secret. Sit thee down, lad, for thou look'st very white."

He sat down. His mother drew a stool towards him, and sat at his feet.

"Did you tell her about Lizzie, then?" asked he, hoarse and low.

"I did, I telled her all; and she fell a crying over my deep sorrow, and the poor wench's sin. And then a light comed into her face, trembling and quivering with some new glad thought; and what dost thou think it was, Will, lad? Nay, I'll not misdoubt but that thy heart will give thanks as mine did, afore God and His angels, for her great goodness. That little Nanny is not her niece, she's our Lizzie's own child, my little grandchild." She could no longer restrain her tears, and they fell hot and fast, but still she looked into his face.

"Did she know it was Lizzie's child? I do not comprehend," said he, flushing red.

"She knows now; she did not at first, but took the little helpless creature in, out of her own pitiful loving heart, guessing only that it was the child of shame, and she's worked for it, and kept it, and tended it ever sin' it were a mere baby, and loves it fondly. Will! won't you love it?" asked she beseechingly.

He was silent for an instant; then he said, "Mother, I'll try. Give me time, for all these things startle me. To think of Susan having to do with such a child!"

"Aye, Will! and to think (as may be yet)

of Susan having to do with the child's mother! For she is tender and pitiful, and speaks hopefully of my lost one, and will try and find her for me, when she comes, as she does sometimes, to thrust money under the door, for her baby. Think of that, Will. Here's Susan, good and pure as the angels in heaven, yet, like them, full of hope and mercy, and one who like them, will rejoice over her as repents. Will, my lad, I'm not afraid of you now, and I must speak, and you must listen. I am your mother, and I dare to command you, because I know I am in the right, and that God is on my side. If he should lead the poor wandering lassie to Susan's door, and she comes back crying and sorrowful, led by that good angel to us once more, thou shalt never say a casting-up word to her about her sin, but be tender and helpful towards one 'who was lost and is found,' so may God's blessing rest on thee, and so mayst thou lead Susan home as thy wife."

She stood no longer as the meek, imploring, gentle mother, but firm and dignified, as if the interpreter of God's will. Her manner was so unusual and solemn, that it overcame all Will's pride and stubbornness. He rose softly while she was speaking, and bent his head as if in reverence at her words, and the solemn injunction which they conveyed. When she had spoken, he said in so subdued a voice that she was almost surprised at the sound, "Mother, I will."

"I may be dead and gone,—but all the same,—thou wilt take home the wandering sinner, and heal up her sorrows, and lead her to her Father's house. My lad! I can speak no more; I'm turned very faint."

He placed her on a chair; he ran for water. She opened her eyes and smiled.

"God bless you, Will. Oh! I am so happy. It seems as if she were found; my heart is so filled with gladness."

That night Mr. Palmer stayed out late and long. Susan was afraid that he was at his old haunts and habits,—getting tipsy at some public-house; and this thought oppressed her, even though she had so much to make her happy, in the consciousness that Will loved her. She sat up long, and then went to bed, leaving all arranged as well as she could for her father's return. She looked at the little rosy sleeping girl who was her bed-fellow, with redoubled tenderness, and with many a prayerful thought. The little arms entwined her neck as she lay down, for Nanny was a light sleeper, and was conscious that she, who was loved with all the power of that sweet childish heart, was near her, and by her, although she was too sleepy to utter any of her half-formed words.

And by-and-by she heard her father come home, stumbling uncertain, trying first the windows, and next the door-fastenings, with many a loud incoherent murmur. The little

innocent twined around her seemed all the sweeter and more lovely, when she thought sadly of her erring father. And presently he called aloud for a light; she had left matches and all arranged as usual on the dresser, but fearful of some accident from fire, in his unusually intoxicated state, she now got up softly, and putting on a cloak, went down to his assistance.

Alas! the little arms that were unclosed from her soft neck belonged to a light, easily awakened sleeper. Nanny missed her darling Susy, and terrified at being left alone in the vast mysterious darkness, which had no bounds, and seemed infinite, she slipped out of bed, and tottered in her little night-gown towards the door. There was a light below, and there was Susy and safety! So she went onwards two steps towards the steep abrupt stairs; and then dazzled with sleepiness, she stood, she wavered, she fell! Down on her head on the stone floor she fell! Susan flew to her, and spoke all soft, entreating, loving words; but her white lids covered up the blue violets of eyes, and there was no murmur came out of the pale lips. The warm tears that ruined down did not awaken her; she lay stiff, and weary with her short life, on Susan's knee. Susan went sick with terror. She carried her up stairs, and laid her tenderly in bed; she dressed herself most hastily, with her trembling fingers. Her father was asleep on the settle down stairs; and useless, and worse than useless if awake. But Susan flew out of the door, and down the quiet resounding street, towards the nearest doctor's house. Quickly she went; but as quickly a shadow followed, as if impelled by some sudden terror. Susan rung wildly the night-bell,—the shadow crouched near. The doctor looked out from an upstairs window.

"A little child has fallen down stairs at No. 9, Crown-street, and is very ill,—dying I'm afraid. Please, for God's sake, sir, come directly. No. 9, Crown-street."

"I'll be there directly," said he, and shut the window.

"For that God you have just spoken about,—for His sake,—tell me are you Susan Palmer? Is it my child that lies a-dying?" said the shadow, springing forwards, and clutching poor Susan's arm.

"It is a little child of two years old,—I do not know whose it is; I love it as my own. Come with me, whoever you are; come with me."

The two sped along the silent streets,—as silent as the night were they. They entered the house; Susan snatched up the light, and carried it up stairs. The other followed.

She stood with wild glaring eyes by the bedside, never looking at Susan, but hungrily gazing at the little white still child. She stooped down, and put her hand tight on her own heart, as if to still its beating,

and bent her ear to the pale lips. Whatever the result was, she did not speak; but threw off the bed-clothes wherewith Susan had tenderly covered up the little creature, and felt its left side,

Then she threw up her arms with a cry of wild despair.

"She is dead! she is dead!"

She looked so fierce, so mad, so haggard, that for an instant Susan was terrified—the next, the holy God had put courage into her heart, and her pure arms were round that guilty wretched creature, and her tears were falling fast and warm upon her breast. But she was thrown off with violence.

"You killed her—you slighted her—you let her fall! you killed her!"

Susan cleared off the thick mist before her, and gazing at the mother with a clear, sweet, angel-eyes, said mournfully—

"I would have laid down my own life for her."

"Oh, the murder is on my soul!" exclaimed the wild bereaved mother, with the fierce impetuosity of one who has none to love her and to be beloved, regard to whom might teach self-restraint.

"Hush!" said Susan, her fingers on her lips. "Here is the doctor. God may suffer her to live."

The poor mother turned sharp round. The doctor mounted the stair. Ah! that mother was right; the little child was really dead and gone.

And when he confirmed her judgment, the mother fell down in a fit. Susan, with her deep grief, had to forget herself, and forget her darling (her charge for years), and question the doctor what she must do with the poor wretch, who lay on the floor in such extreme misery.

"She is the mother!" said she.

"Why did not she take care of the child?" asked he, almost angrily.

But Susan only said, "The little child slept with me; and it was I that left her."

"I will go back and make up a composing draught; and while I am away you must get her to bed."

Susan took out some of her own clothes, and softly undressed the stiff, powerless form. There was no other bed in the house but the one in which her father slept. So she tenderly lifted the body of her darling; and was going to take it down stairs, but the mother opened her eyes, and seeing what she was about she said,

"I am not worthy to touch her, I am so wicked; I have spoken to you as I never should have spoken; but I think you are very good; may I have my own child to lie in my arms for a little while?"

Her voice was so strange a contrast to what it had been before she had gone into the fit that Susan hardly recognised it; it was now so unspeakably soft, so irresistibly

pleading; the features too had lost their fierce expression, and were almost as placid as death. Susan could not speak, but she carried the little child, and laid it in its mother's arms; then as she looked at them, something overpowered her, and she knelt down, crying aloud,

"Oh, my God, my God, have mercy on her, and forgive, and comfort her."

But the mother kept smiling, and stroking the little face, murmuring soft tender words, as if it were alive; she was going mad, Susan thought; but she prayed on, and on, and ever still she prayed with streaming eyes.

The doctor came with the draught. The mother took it, with docile unconsciousness of its nature as medicine. The doctor sat by her and soon she fell asleep. Then he rose softly, and beckoning Susan to the door, he spoke to her there.

"You must take the corpse out of her arms. She will not awake. That draught will make her sleep for many hours. I will call before noon again. It is now daylight. Good-bye."

Susan shut him out; and then gently extricating the dead child from its mother's arms, she could not resist making her own quiet moan over her darling. She tried to learn off its little placid face, dumb and pale before her.

"Not all the scalding tears of care  
Shall wash away that vision fair!

Not all the thousand thoughts that rise,

Not all the sights that dim her eyes,

Shall e'er usurp the place

Of that little angel-face."

And then she remembered what remained to be done. She saw that all was right in the house; her father was still dead asleep on the settle, in spite of all the noise of the night. She went out through the quiet streets, deserted still although it was broad daylight, and to where the Leighs lived. Mrs. Leigh, who kept her country hours, was opening her window shutters. Susan took her by the arm, and, without speaking, went into the house-place. There she knelt down before the astonished Mrs. Leigh, and cried as she had never done before; but the miserable night had overpowered her, and she who had gone through so much calmly, now that the pressure seemed removed could not find the power to speak.

"My poor dear! What has made thy heart so sore as to come and cry a-this-ns. Speak and tell me. Nay, cry on, poor wench, if thou canst not speak yet. It will ease the heart, and then thou canst tell me."

"Nanny is dead!" said Susan. "I left her to go to father, and she fell down stairs, and never breathed again. Oh, that's my sorrow! but I've more to tell. Her mother



is come—is in our house! Come and see if it's your Lizzie." Mrs. Leigh could not speak, but trembling, put on her things, and went with Susan in dizzy haste back to Crown-street.

#### CHAPTER IV.

As they entered the house in Crown-street, they perceived that the door would not open freely on its hinges, and Susan instinctively looked behind to see the cause of the obstruction. She immediately recognised the appearance of a little parcel, wrapped in a scrap of newspaper, and evidently containing money. She stooped and picked it up.

"Look!" said she, sorrowfully, "the mother was bringing this for her child last night."

But Mrs. Leigh did not answer. So near to the ascertaining if it were her lost child or no, she could not be arrested, but pressed onwards with trembling steps and a beating, fluttering heart. She entered the bed-room, dark and still. She took no heed of the little corpse, over which Susan paused, but she went straight to the bed, and withdrawing the curtain, saw Lizzie,—but not the former Lizzie, bright, gay, buoyant, and undimmed. This Lizzie was old before her time; her beauty was gone; deep lines of care, and alas! of want (or thus the mother imagined) were printed on the cheek, so round, and fair, and smooth, when last she gladdened her mother's eyes. Even in her sleep she bore the look of woe and despair which was the prevalent expression of her face by day; even in her sleep she had forgotten how to smile. But all these marks of the sin and sorrow she had passed through only made her mother love her the more. She stood looking at her with greedy eyes, which seemed as though no gazing could satisfy their longing; and at last she stooped down and kissed the pale, worn hand that lay outside the bed-clothes. No touch disturbed the sleeper; the mother need not have laid the hand so gently down upon the counterpane. There was no sign of life, save only now and then a deep sob-like sigh. Mrs. Leigh sat down beside the bed, and still holding back the curtain, looked on and on, as if she could never be satisfied.

Susan would fain have stayed by her darling one; but she had many calls upon her time and thoughts, and her will had now, as ever, to be given up to that of others. All seemed to devolve the burden of their cares on her. Her father, ill-humored from his last night's intemperance, did not scruple to reproach her with being the cause of little Nanny's death; and when, after hearing his upbraiding meekly for some time, she could no longer restrain herself, but began to cry,

he wounded her even more by his injudicious attempts at comfort; for he said it was as well the child was dead; it was none of theirs, and why should they be troubled with it? Susan wrung her hands at this, and came and stood before her father, and implored him to forbear. Then she had to take all requisite steps for the coroner's inquest; she had to arrange for the dismissal of her school; she had to summon a little neighbor, and send his willing feet on a message to William Leigh, who, she felt, ought to be informed of his mother's whereabouts, and of the whole state of affairs. She asked her messenger to tell him to come and speak to her,—that his mother was at her house. She was thankful that her father sauntered out to have a gossip at the nearest coach-stand, and to relate as many of the night's adventures as he knew; for as yet he was in ignorance of the watcher and the watched, who silently passed away the hours up stairs.

At dinner-time Will came. He looked red, glad, impatient, excited. Susan stood calm and white before him, her soft, loving eyes gazing straight into his.

"Will," said she, in a low, quiet voice, "your sister is up stairs."

"My sister!" said he, as if affrighted at the idea, and losing his glad look in one of gloom. Susan saw it, and her heart sank a little, but she went on as calm to all appearance as ever.

"She was little Nanny's mother, as perhaps you know. Poor little Nanny was killed last night by a fall down stairs." All the calmness was gone; all the suppressed feeling was displayed in spite of every effort. She sat down, and hid her face from him, and cried bitterly. He forgot everything but the wish, the longing to comfort her. He put his arm around her waist, and bent over her. But all he could say, was, "Oh, Susan, how can I comfort you! Don't take on so,—pray don't!" He never changed the words, but the tone varied every time he spoke. At last she seemed to regain her power over herself; and she wiped her eyes, and once more looked upon him with her own quiet, earnest, and unfearing gaze.

"Your sister was near the house. She came in on hearing my words to the doctor. She is asleep now, and your mother is watching her. I wanted to tell you all myself. Would you like to see your mother?"

"No!" said he. "I would rather see none but thee. Mother told me thou knew'st all." His eyes were downcast in their shame.

But the holy and pure, did not lower or veil her eyes.

She said, "Yes, I know all—all but her sufferings. Think what they must have been!"

He made answer low and stern, "She deserved them all; every jot."

"In the eye of God, perhaps she does. He is the judge; we are not."

"Oh!" she said with a sudden burst, "Will Leigh! I have thought so well of you; don't go and make me think you cruel and hard. Goodness is not goodness unless there is mercy and tenderness with it. There is your mother who has been nearly heart-broken, now full of rejoicing over her child—think of your mother."

"I do think of her," said he. "I remember the promise I gave her last night. Thou shouldst give me time. I would do right in time. I never think it o'er in quiet. But I will do what is right and fitting, never fear. Thou hast spoken out very plain to me; and misdoubted me, Susan; I love thee so, that thy words cut me. If I did hang back a bit from making sudden promises, it was because not even for love of thee, would I say what I was not feeling; and at first I could not feel all at once as thou wouldst have me. But I'm not cruel and hard; for if I had been, I should na' have grieved as I have done."

He made as if he were going away; and indeed he did feel he would rather think it over in quiet. But Susan, grieved at her incautious words, which had all the appearance of harshness, went a step or two nearer—paused—and then, all over blushes, said in a low soft whisper—

"Oh Will! I beg your pardon. I am very sorry—wont you forgive me?"

She who had always drawn back, and been so reserved, said this in the very softest manner; with eyes now uplifted beseechingly, now dropped to the ground. Her sweet confusion told more than words could do; and Will turned back, all joyous in his certainty of being beloved, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

"My own Susan!" he said.

Meanwhile the mother watched her child in the room above.

It was late in the afternoon before she awoke; for the sleeping draught had been very powerful. The instant she awoke, her eyes were fixed on her mother's face with a gaze as unflinching as if she were fascinated. Mrs. Leigh did not turn away; nor move. For it seemed as if motion would unlock the stony command over herself which, while so perfectly still, she was enabled to preserve. But by-and-bye Lizzie cried out in a piercing voice of agony—

"Mother, don't look at me! I have been so wicked!" and instantly she hid her face, and grovelled among the bedclothes, and lay like one dead—so motionless was she.

Mrs. Leigh knelt down by the bed, and spoke in the most soothing tones.

"Lizzie, dear, don't speak so. I'm thy mother, darling; don't be afraid of me. I never left off loving thee, Lizzie. I was always a-thinking of thee. Thy father for-

gave thee afore he died." (There was a little start here, but no sound was heard.) "Lizzie, lass, I'll do aught for thee; I'll live for thee; only don't be afraid of me. Whate'er thou art or hast been, we'll ne'er speak on't. We'll leave th'oud times behind us, and go back to the Upelose Farm. I but left it to find thee, my lass; and God has led me to thee. Blessed be His name. And God is good too, Lizzie. Thou hast not forgotten thy Bible, I'll be bound, for thou wert always a scholar. I'm no reader, but I learnt off them texts to comfort me a bit, and I've said them many a day to my self. Lizzie, lass, don't hide thy head so, it's thy mother as is speaking to thee. Thy little child clung to me only yesterday; and if it's gone to be an angel, it will speak to God for thee. Nay, don't sob a that 'as; thou shalt have it again in Heaven; I know thou'll strive to get there, for thy little Nanny's sake—and listen! I'll tell thee God's promises to them that are penitent—only don't be afraid!"

Mrs. Leigh folded her hands, and strove to speak very clearly, while she repeated every tender and merciful text she could remember. She could tell from the breathing that her daughter was listening; but she was so dizzy and sick herself when she had ended, that she could not go on speaking. It was all she could do to keep from crying aloud.

At last she heard her daughter's voice.

"Where have they taken her to?" she asked.

"She is down stairs. So quiet, and peaceful and happy she looks."

"Could she speak? Oh, if God—if I might but have heard her little voice! Mother, I used to dream of it. May I see her once again—Oh mother, if I strive very hard, and God is very merciful, and I go to heaven, I shall not know her—I shall not know my own again—she will shun me as a stranger and eling to Susan Palmer and to you. Oh woe! Oh woe!" She shook with exceeding sorrow.

In her earnestness of speech she had uncovered her face and tried to read Mrs. Leigh's thoughts through her looks. And when she saw those aged eyes brimming full of tears, and marked the quivering lips, she threw her arms around the faithful mother's neck, and wept there as she had done in many a childish sorrow; but with a deeper, a more wretched grief.

Her mother hushed her on her breast; and lulled her as if she were a baby; and she grew still and quiet.

They sat thus for a long, long time. At last, Susan Palmer came up with some tea and bread and butter for Mrs. Leigh. She watched the mother feed her sick, unwilling child, with every fond inducement to eat which she could devise; they neither of them took notice of Susan's presence.

That night they lay in each other's arms ; but Susan slept on the ground beside them.

They took the little corpse (the little unconscious sacrifice, whose early calling-home had reclaimed her poor wandering mother,) to the hills, which in her life-time she had never seen. They dared not lay her by the stern grand-father in Milne-Row churchyard, but they bore her to a lone moorland graveyard, where long ago the quakers used to bury their dead. They laid her there on the sunny slope, where the earliest spring-flowers blow.

Will and Susan live at the Upclose Farm. Mrs. Leigh and Lizzie dwell in a cottage so secluded that, until you drop into the very hollow where it is placed, you do not see it. Tom is a schoolmaster in Rochdale, and he and Will help to support their mother. I only know that, if the cottage be hidden in a green hollow of the hills, every sound of

sorrow in the whole upland is heard there—every call of suffering or of sickness for help is listened to, by a sad, gentle-looking woman, who rarely smiles (and when she does, her smile is more sad than other people's tears), but who comes out of her seclusion whenever there's a shadow in any household. Many hearts bless Lizzie Leigh, but she—she prays always and ever for forgiveness—such forgiveness as may enable her to see her child once more. Mrs. Leigh is quiet and happy. Lizzie is to her eyes something precious—as the lost piece of silver—found once more. Susan is the bright one who brings sunshine to all. Children grow around her and call her blessed. One is called Nanny. Her, Lizzie often takes to the sunny graveyard in the uplands, and while the little creature gathers the daisies, and make chains, Lizzie sits by a little grave, and weeps bitterly.



# THE MINER'S DAUGHTERS.

## A TALE OF THE PEAK.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE CHILD'S TRAGEDY.

THERE is no really beautiful part of this kingdom so little known as the Peak of Derbyshire. Matlock, with its tea-garden trumpery and mock-heroic wonders; Buxton, with its bleak hills and fashionable bathers; the truly noble Chatsworth and the venerable Haddon, engross almost all that the public generally have seen of the Peak. It is talked of as a land of mountains, which in reality are only hills; but its true beauty lies in valleys that have been created by the rending of the earth in some primeval convulsion, and which present a thousand charms to the eyes of the lover of nature. How deliciously do the crystal waters of the Wye and the Dove rush along such valleys, or dales, as they are called. With what a wild variety do the gray rocks soar up amid their woods and copses. How airily stand in the clear heavens the lofty limestone precipices, and the gray edges of rock gleam out from the bare green downs—there *never* called downs. What a genuine Saxon air is there cast over the population, what a Saxon bluntness salutes you in their speech!

It is into the heart of this region that we propose now to carry the reader. Let him suppose himself with us now on the road from Ashford-in-the-water to Tideswell. We are at the Bull's Head, a little inn on that road. There is nothing to create wonder, or a suspicion of a hidden Arcadia in anything you see, but another step forward, and—there! There sinks a world of valleys at your feet. To your left lies the delicious Monsal Dale. Old Finn Hill lifts his gray head grandly over it. Hobthrush's Castle stands bravely forth in the hollow of his side—gray, and desolate, and mysterious. The sweet Wye goes winding and sounding at his feet, amid its narrow green meadows, green as the emerald, and its dark glossy

alders. Before us stretches on, equally beautiful, Cressbrook Dale; Little Edale shows its cottages from amidst its trees; and as we advance, the Mousselin-de-laine Mills stretch across the mouth of Miller's Dale, and startle with the aspect of so much life amid so much solitude.

But our way is still onward. We resist the attraction of Cressbrook village on its lofty eminence, and plunge to the right, into Wardlow Dale. Here we are buried deep in woods, and yet behold still deeper the valley descend below us. There is an Alpine feeling upon us. We are carried once more, as in a dream, into the Saxon Switzerland. Above us stretch the boldest ranges of lofty precipices, and deep amid the woods are heard the voices of children. These come from a few workmen's houses, couched at the foot of a cliff that rises high and bright amid the sun. That is Wardlow Cop; and there we mean to halt for a moment. Forwards lies a wild region of hills, and valleys, and lead-mines, but forward goes no road, except such as you can make yourself through the tangled woods.

At the foot of Wardlow Cop, before this little hamlet of Bellamy Wick was built, or the glen was dignified with the name of Raven Dale, there lived a miner who had no term for his place of abode. He lived, he said, under Wardlow Cop, and that contented him.

His house was one of those little, solid, gray limestone cottages, with gray flagstone roofs, which abound in the Peak. It had stood under that lofty precipice when the woods which now so densely fill the valley were but newly planted. There had been a mine near it, which had no doubt been the occasion of its erection in so solitary a place; but that mine was now worked out, and David Dunster, the miner, now worked at a mine right over the hills in Miller's Dale. He was seldom at home, except at night, and on Sundays. His wife, besides keeping her little house, and digging and

weeding in the strip of a garden that lay on the steep slope above the house, hemmed in with a stone wall, also seamed stockings for a framework-knitter in Ashford, whither she went once or twice in the week.

They had three children, a boy and two girls. The boy was about eight years of age; the girls were about five and six. These children were taught their lessons of spelling and reading by the mother, amongst her other multifarious tasks; for she was one of those who are called regular plodders. She was quiet, patient, and always doing, though never in a bustle. She was not one of those who acquire a character for vast industry by doing everything in a mighty flurry, though they contrive to find time for a tolerable deal of gossip under the plea of resting a bit, and which "resting a bit" they always terminate by an exclamation that "they must be off though, for they have a world of work to do." Betty Dunster, on the contrary, was looked on as rather "a slow coach." If you remarked that she was a hard-working woman, the reply was, "Well, she's always doing—Betty's work's never done; but then she does na hurry hersen." The fact was, Betty was a thin, spare woman, of no very strong constitution, but of an untiring spirit. Her pleasure and rest were, when David came home at night, to have his supper ready, and to sit down opposite to him at the little round table, and help him, giving a bit now and then to the children, that came and stood round, though they had had their suppers, and were ready for bed as soon as they had seen something of their "dad."

David Dunster was one of those remarkably tall fellows that you see about these hills, who seem of all things the very worst made men to creep into the little mole holes on the hill sides that they call lead-mines. But David did manage to burrow under and through the hard limestone rocks as well as any of them. He was a hard-working man, though he liked a sup of beer, as most Derbyshire men do, and sometimes came home none of the soberest. He was naturally of a very hasty temper, and would fly into great rages; and if he were put out by anything in the working of the mines, or the conduct of his fellow-workmen, he would stay away from home for days, drinking at Tideswell, or the Bull's Head at the top of Monsal Dale, or down at the Miner's Arms at Ashford-in-the-water.

Betty Dunster bore all this patiently. She looked on these things somewhat as matters of course. At that time, and even now, how few miners do not drink and "rol a bit," as they call it. She was, therefore, tolerant, and let the storms blow over, ready always to persuade her husband to go home and sleep off his drink and anger, but if he were too violent, leaving him till ano-

ther attempt might succeed better. She was very fond of her children, and not only taught them on week days their lessons, and to help her to seam, but also took them to the Methodist Chapel in "Tidser," as they called Tideswell, whither, whenever she could, she enticed David. David, too, in his way, was fond of the children, especially of the boy, who was called David after him. He was quite wrapped up in the lad, to use the phrase of the people in that part; in fact, he was foolishly and mischievously fond of him. He would give him beer to drink, "to make a true Briton on him," as he said, spite of Betty's earnest endeavor to prevent it—telling him that he was laying the foundation in the lad of the same faults that he had himself. But David Dunster did not look on drinking as a fault at all. It was what he had been used to all his life. It was what all the miners had been used to for generations. A man was looked on as a milk-sop and a Molly Coddle, that would not take his mug of ale, and be merry with his comrades. It required the light of education, and the efforts that have been made by the Temperance Societies, to break in on this ancient custom of drinking, which, no doubt, has flourished in these hills since the Danes and other Scandinavians bored and perforated them of old for the ores of lead and copper. To Betty Dunster's remonstrances, and commendations of tea, David would reply—"Botheration, Betty, wench! Dunna tell me about thy tea and such-like pig's-wesh. It's all very well for women; but a man, Betty, a man mun ha' a sup of real stingo, lass. He mun ha' summit to prop his ribs out, lass, as he delves through th' chert and tood-stone. When tha weylds th' maundrel (the pick), and I wesh th' dishes, tha shall ha' th' drink, my wench, and I'll ha' th' tea. Till then, prithee let me aloon, and dunna bother me, for it's no use. It only kiks my monkey up."

And Betty found that it was of no use; that it did only kick his monkey up, and so she let him alone, except when she could drop in a persuasive word or two. The mill-owners at Cressbrook and Miller's Dale had forbidden any public-house nearer than Edale, and they had more than once called the people together to point out to them the mischiefs of drinking, and the advantages to be derived from the very savings of temperance. But all these measures, though they had some effect on the mill people, had very little on the miners. They either sent to Tideswell or Edale for kegs of beer to peddle at the mines, or they went thither themselves on receiving their wages.

And let no one suppose that David Dunster was worse than his fellows; or that Betty Dunster thought her case a particularly hard one. David was "pretty much of a muchness," according to the country phrase, with

the rest of his hard-working tribe, which was, and always had been, a hard-drinking tribe; and Betty, though she wished it different, did not complain, just because it was of no use, and because she was no worse off than her neighbors.

Often when she went to "carry in her hose" to Ashford, she left the children at home by themselves. She had no alternative. They were there in that solitary valley for many hours playing alone. And to them it was not solitary. It was all that they knew of life, and that all was very pleasant to them. In spring, they hunted for birds'-nests in the copses, and amongst the rocks and gray stones that had fallen from them. In the copses built the blackbirds and thrushes; in the rocks the firetails; and the gray wagtails in the stones which were so exactly of their own color, as to make it difficult to see them. In summer, they gathered flowers and berries, and in the winter they played at horses, kings, and shops, and sundry other things in the house.

On one of these occasions, a bright afternoon in autumn, the three children had rambled down the glen, and found a world of amusement in being teams of horses, in making a little mine at the foot of a tall cliff, and in marching for soldiers, for they had one day—the only time in their lives—seen some soldiers go through the village of Ashford, when they had gone there with their mother, for she now and then took them with her when she had something from the shop to carry besides her bundle of hose. At length they came to the foot of an open hill which swelled to a considerable height, with a round and climbable side, on which grew a wilderness of bushes amid which lay scattered masses of gray crag. A small winding path went up this, and they followed it. It was not long, however, before they saw some things which excited their eager attention. Little David, who was the guide, and assumed to himself much importance as the protector of his sisters, exclaimed, "See here!" and springing forward, plucked a fine crimson cluster of the mountain bramble. His sisters, on seeing this, rushed on with like eagerness. They soon forsook the little winding and craggy footpath, and hurried through sinking masses of moss and dry grass, from bush to bush and place to place. They were soon far up above the valley, and almost every step revealed to them some delightful prize. The clusters of the mountain bramble, resembling mulberries, and known only to the inhabitants of the hills, were abundant and were rapidly devoured. The dewberry was as eagerly gathered—its large, purple fruit passing with them for blackberries. In their hands were soon seen posies of the lovely grass of Parnassus, the mountain cistus, and the bright blue geranium.

Higher and higher the little group ascended in this quest, till the sight of the wide, naked hills, and the hawks circling round the lofty tower-like crags over their heads, made them feel serious and somewhat afraid.

"Where are we?" asked Jane, the elder sister. "Arn't we a long way from hom?"

"Let us go hom," said little Nancy. "I'm afeerd here;" clutching hold of Jane's frock.

"Pho, nonsense!" said David "what are you afeerd on? I'll tak care on you, niver fear."

And with this he assumed a bold and defying aspect, and said, "Come along; there are nests in th' hazzles up yonder."

He began to mount again, but the two girls hung back and said, "Nay, David, dunna go higher; we are both afeerd;" and Jane added, "It's a long wee from hom, I'm sure."

"And those birds screechen' so up there; I darna go up," cried little Nancy. They were the hawks that she meant, which hovered whimpering and screaming about the highest cliffs. David called them little cowards, but began to descend, and, presently, seeking for berries and flowers as they descended, they regained the little winding, craggy road, and, while they were calling to each other, discovered a remarkable echo on the opposite hill side. On this, they shouted to it, and laughed, and were half frightened when it laughed and shouted again. Little Nancy said it must be an old man in the inside of the mountain; at which they were all really afraid, though David put on a big look and said, "Nonsense! it was nothing at all." But Jane asked how nothing at all could shout and laugh as it did? and on this little Nancy plucked her again by the frock, and said in turn, "Oh, dear, let's go hom!"

But at this David gave a wild whoop to frighten them, and when the hill whooped again, and the sisters began to run, he burst into laughter, and the strange spectral Ha! ha! ha! that ran along the inside of the hill as it were, completed their fear, and they stopped their ears with their hands and scuttled away down the hill. But now David seized them, and pulling their hands down from their heads, he said, "See here! what a nice place with the stones sticking out like seats. Why, it's like a little house; let us stay and play a bit here." It was a little hollow in the hill side surrounded by projecting stones like an amphitheatre. The sisters were still afraid, but the sight of this little hollow with its seats of crag had such a charm for them that they promised David they would stop a while, if he would promise not to shout and awake the echo. David readily promised this, and so they sat down, David proposed to keep a school, and cut a



hazel wand from a bush and began to lord it over his two scholars in a very pompous manner. The two sisters pretended to be much afraid, and to read very diligently on pieces of flat stone which they had picked up. And then David became a serjeant and was drilling them for soldiers, and stuck pieces of fern into their hair for cockades. And then, soon after, they were sheep, and he was the shepherd; and he was catching his flock and going to shear them, and made so much noise that Jane cried, "Hold! there's the echo mocking us."

At this they all were still. But David said, "Pho! never mind the echo; I must shear my sheep;" but just as he was seizing little Nancy to pretend to shear her with a piece of stick, Jane cried out, "Look! look! how black it is coming down the valley there! There's going to be a dreadful storm; let us hurry hom!"

David and Nancy both looked up, and agreed to run as fast down the hill as they could. But the next moment the driving storm swept over the hill, and the whole valley was hid in it. The three children still hurried on, but it became quite dark, and they soon lost the track, and were tossed about by the wind, so that they had difficulty to keep on their legs. Little Nancy began to cry, and the three taking hold of each other endeavored in silence to make their way homewards. But presently they all stumbled over a large stone, and fell some distance down the hill. They were not hurt, but much frightened, for they now remembered the precipices, and were afraid every minute of going over them. They now strove to find the track by going up again, but they could not find it anywhere. Sometimes they went upwards till they thought they were quite too far, and then they went downwards till they were completely bewildered; and then, like the Babes in the Wood, "They sate them down and cried."

But ere they had sate long, they heard footsteps, and listened. They certainly heard them and shouted, but there was no answer. David shouted, "Help! fayther! mother! help!" but there was no answer. The wind swept fiercely by; the hawks whimpered from the high crags, lost in the darkness of the storm; and the rain fell, driving along icy cold. Presently, there was a gleam of light through the clouds; the hill-side became visible, and through the haze they saw a tall figure as of an old man ascending the hill. He appeared to carry two loads slung from his shoulders by a strap; a box hanging before, and a bag hanging at his back. He wound up the hill slowly and wearily, and presently he stopped and relieving himself of his load, seated himself on a piece of crag to rest. Again David shouted, but there still was no answer.

The old man sate as if no shout had been heard—immoveable.

"It is a man," said David, "and I will mak him hear;" and with that he shouted once more with all his might. But the old man made no sign of recognition. He did not even turn his head, but he took off his hat and began to wipe his brow as if warm with the ascent.

"What can it be?" said David in astonishment. "It is a man, that's sartain. I'll run and see."

"Nay, nay!" shrieked the sisters. "Don't, David! don't! It's perhaps the old man out of the mountain that's been mocking us. Perhaps," added Jane, "he only comes out in storms and darkness."

"Stuff!" said David, "an echo isn't a man; it's only our own voices. I'll see who it is;" and away he darted, spite of the poor girl's crying in terror, "Don't; don't, David! Oh, don't."

But David was gone. He was not long in reaching the old man, who sate on his stone breathing hard, as if out of breath with his ascent, but not appearing to perceive David's approach. The rain and the wind drove fiercely upon him, but he did not seem to mind it. David was half afraid to approach close to him, but he called out, "Help; help, mester!" The old man remained as unconscious of his presence. "Hillo!" cried David again. "Can you tell us the way down, mester?" There was no answer, and David was beginning to feel a shudder of terror run through every limb, when the clouds cleared considerably, and he suddenly exclaimed, "Why it's old Tobias Turton of top of Edale, and he's as deaf as a door nail!"

In an instant, David was at his side; seized his coat to make him aware of his presence; and, on the old man perceiving him, shouted in his ear, "Which is the way down here, Mester Turton? Where's the track?"

"Down? Weighs o' the back?" said the old man; "ay, my lad, I was fain to sit down; it does weigh o' th' back, sure enough."

"Where's the foot-track?" shouted David, again.

"Th' foot-track? Why, what art ta doing here, my lad, in such a storm? Isn't it David Dunster's lad?"

David nodded. "Why the track's here! see;" and the old man stamped his foot. "Get down hom, my lad, as fast as thou can. What dun they do letting thee be upon th' hills in such a dee as this?"

David nodded his thanks, and turned to descend the track, while the old man, adjusting his burden again, silently and wearily recommenced his way upwards.

David shouted to his sisters as he descended, and they quickly replied. He called to them to come towards him, as he

was on the track, and was afraid to quit it again. They endeavored to do this; but the darkness was now redoubled, and the wind and rain became more furious than ever. The two sisters were soon bewildered amongst the bushes, and David, who kept calling to them at intervals to direct their course towards him soon heard them crying bitterly. At this, he forgot the necessity of keeping the track, and darting towards them, soon found them by continuing to call to them, and took their hands to lead them to the track. But they were now drenched through with the rain, and shivered with cold and fear. David, with a stout heart, endeavored to cheer them. He told them the track was close by, and that they would soon be at home. But though the track was not ten yards off, somehow they did not find it. Bushes and projecting rocks turned them out of their course; and owing to the confusion caused by the wind, the darkness, and their terror, they searched in vain for the track. Sometimes they thought they had found it, and went on a few paces, only to stumble over loose stones, or get entangled in the bushes.

It was now absolutely becoming night. Their terrors increased greatly. They shouted and cried aloud, in the hope of making their parents hear them. They felt sure that both father and mother must be come home; and as sure that they would be hunting for them. But they did not reflect that their parents could not tell in what direction they had gone. Both father and mother were come home, and the mother had instantly rushed out to try to find them, on perceiving that they were not in the house. She had hurried to and fro, and called—not at first supposing they would be far. But when she heard nothing of them, she ran in, and begged of her husband to join in the search. But at first David Dunster would do nothing. He was angry at them for going away from the house, and said he was too tired to go on a wild goose chase through the plantations after them. "They are in th' plantations," said he: "they are sheltering there somewhere. Let them alone, and they'll come home, with a good long tail behind them."

With this piece of a child's song of sheep, David sat down to his supper, and Betty Dunster hurried up the valley, shouting—"Children, where are you? David! Jane! Nancy! where are you?"

When she heard nothing of them, she hurried still more wildly up the hill towards the village. When she arrived there—the distance of a mile—she inquired from house to house, but no one had seen anything of them. It was clear they had not been in that direction. An alarm was thus created in the village; and several young men set out to join Mrs. Dunster in the quest. They

again descended the valley towards Dunster's house, shouting every now and then, and listening. The night was pitch dark and the rain fell heavily; but the wind had considerably abated, and once they thought they heard a faint cry in answer to their call, far down the valley. They were right; the children had heard the shouting, and had replied to it. But they were far off. The young men shouted again, but there was no answer; and after shouting once more without success, they hastened on. When they reached David Dunster's house, they found the door open, and no one within. They knew that David had set off in quest of the children himself, and they determined to descend the valley. The distracted mother went with them, crying silently to herself, and praying inwardly, and every now and then trying to shout. But the young men raised their strong voices above hers, and made the cliffs echo with their appeals.

Anon a voice answered them down the valley. They ran on as well as the darkness would let them, and soon found that it was David Dunster, who had been in the plantations on the other side of the valley; but hearing nothing of the lost children, now joined them. He said he had heard the cry from the hill-side farther down, that answered to their shouts; and he was sure that it was his boy David's voice. But he had shouted again, and there had been no answer but a wild scream as of terror, that made his blood run cold.

"O God!" exclaimed the distracted mother, "what can it be? David! David! Jane! Nancy!"

There was no answer. The young men bade Betty Dunster to contain herself, and they would find the children before they went home again. All held on down the valley, and in the direction whence the voice came. Many times did the young men and the now strongly agitated father shout and listen. At length they seemed to hear voices of weeping and moaning. They listened—they were sure they heard a lamenting—it could only be the children. But why then did they not answer? On struggled the men, and Mrs. Dunster followed wildly after. Now, again, they stood and shouted, and a kind of terrified scream followed the shout.

"God in heaven!" exclaimed the mother; "what is it? There is something dreadful. My children! my children! where are you?"

"Be silent, pray do, Mrs. Dunster," said one of the young men, "or we cannot catch the sounds so as to follow them." They again listened, and the wailings of the children were plainly heard. The whole party pushed forward over stock and stone up the hill. They called again, and there was a cry of "Here! here! father! mother! where are you?"

In a few moments more the whole party had reached the children, who stood drenched with rain, and trembling violently, under a cliff that gave no shelter, but was exposed especially to the wind and rain.

"O Christ! My children!" cried the mother wildly, struggling forwards and clasp- ing one in her arms. "Nancy! Jane! But where is David? David! David! Oh, where is David? Where is your brother?"

The whole party was startled at not see- ing the boy, and joined in a simultaneous "Where is he? Where is your brother?"

The two children only wept and trem- bled more violently, and burst into loud crying.

"Silence!" shouted the father. "Where is David, I tell ye? Is he lost? David, lad, where art thou?"

All listened, but there was no answer but the renewed crying of the two girls.

"Where is the lad, then?" thundered forth the father with a terrible oath.

The two terrified children cried, "Oh, down there! down there!"

"Down where? Oh God!" exclaimed one of the young men; "why it's a preci- pice! Down there!"

At this dreadful intelligence the mother gave a wild shriek, and fell senseless on the ground. The young men caught her, and dragged her back from the edge of the pre- cipice. The father in the same moment, furious at what he heard, seized the younger child that happened to be near him, and shaking it violently, swore he would fling it down after the lad.

He was angry with the poor children, as if they had caused the destruction of his boy. The young men seized him, and bade him think what he was about; but the man believing his boy had fallen down the pre- cipice, was like a madman. He kicked at his wife as she lay on the ground, as if she were guilty of this calamity by leaving the children at home. He was furious against the poor girls, as if they had led their bro- ther into danger. In his violent rage he was a perfect maniac, and the young men, pushing him away, cried shame on him. In a while, the desperate man, torn by a hur- ricane of passion, sate himself down on a crag, and burst into a tempest of tears, and struck his head violently with his clenched fists, and cursed himself and everybody. It was a dreadful scene.

Meantime, some of the young men had gone down below the precipice on which the children had stood, and, feeling amongst the loose stones, had found the body of poor little David. He was truly dead!

When he had heard the shout of his father, or of the young men, he had given one loud shout in answer, and saying, "Come on! never fear now!" sprang for- ward, and was over the precipice in the

dark, and flew down and was dashed to pieces. His sisters heard a rush, a faint shriek, and suddenly stopping, escaped the destruction that poor David had found.

## CHAPTER II.

### MILL LIFE

WE must pass over the painful and dread- ful particulars of that night, and of a long time to come; the maniacal rage of the father, the shattered heart and feelings of the mother, the dreadful state of the two re- maining children, to whom their brother was one of the most precious objects in a world which, like theirs, contained so few. One moment to have seen him full of life, and fun, and bravado, and almost the next a lifeless and battered corpse, was something too strange and terrible to be soon sur- mounted. But this was wofully aggravated by the cruel anger of their father, who con- tinued to regard them as guilty of the death of his favorite boy. He seemed to take no pleasure in them. He never spoke to them but to scold them. He drank more deeply than ever, and came home later; and when there was sullen and morose. When their mother, who suffered severely, but still plodded on with all her duties, said, "David, they are thy children too;" he would reply savagely, "Hod thy tongue! What's a pack o' wenchies to my lad?"

What tended to render the miner more hard towards the two girls was a circum- stance which would have awakened a better feeling in a softer father's heart. Nancy, the younger girl, since the dreadful catas- trophe, had seemed to grow gradually dull and defective in her intellect; she had a slow and somewhat idiotic air and manner. Her mother perceived it, and was struck with consternation by it. She tried to rouse her, but in vain. She could not perform her ordinary reading and spelling lessons. She seemed to have forgotten what was already learned. She appeared to have a difficulty in moving her legs, and carried her hands as if she had suffered a partial paralysis. Jane, her sister, was dreadfully distressed at it, and she and her mother wept many bitter tears over her. One day, in the fol- lowing spring, they took her with them to Ashford, and consulted the doctor there. On examining her, and hearing fully what had taken place at the time of the brother's death—the fact of which he well knew, for it, of course, was known to the whole coun- try round—he shook his head, and said he was afraid they must make up their minds to a sad case; that the terrors of that night had affected her brain, and that, through it, the whole nervous system had suffered, and



was continuing to suffer the most melancholy effects. The only thing, he thought, in her favor was her youth; and added, that it might have a good effect if they could leave the place where she had undergone such a terrible shock. But whether they did or not, kindness and soothing attentions to her would do more than anything else.

Mrs. Dunster and little Jane returned home with heavy hearts. The doctor's opinion had only confirmed their fears; for Jane, though but a child, had quickness and affection for her sister enough to make her comprehend the awful nature of poor Nancy's condition. Mrs. Dunster told her husband the doctor's words, for she thought they would awaken some tenderness in him towards the unfortunate child. But he said, "That's just what I expected. You'll grow soft, and then who's to maintain her? You mun goo to the workhouse."

With that he took his maundrel and went off to his work. Instead of softening his nature, this intelligence seemed only to harden and brutalise it. He drank now more and more. But all that summer the mother and Jane did all that they could think of to restore the health and mind of poor Nancy. Every morning, when the father was gone to work, Jane went to a spring up in the opposite wood, famed for the coldness and sweetness of its waters. On this account the proprietors of the mills at Cressbrook had put down a large trough there under the spreading trees, and the people fetched the water even from the village. Hence Jane brought, at many journeys, this cold, delicious water to bathe her sister in; they then rubbed her warm with cloths, and gave her new milk for her breakfast. Her lessons were not left off, lest the mind should sink into fatuity, but were made as easy as possible. Jane continued to talk to her, and laugh with her, as if nothing was amiss, though she did it with a heavy heart, and she engaged her to weed and hoe with her in their little garden. She did not dare to lead her far out into the valley, lest it might excite her memory of the past fearful time, but she gathered her flowers, and continued to play with her at all their accustomed sports, of building houses with pieces of pots and stones, and imagining gardens and parks. The anxious mother, when some weeks were gone by, fancied that there was really some improvement. The cold bathing seemed to have strengthened the system: the poor child walked, and bore herself with more freedom and firmness. She became ardently fond of being with her sister, and attentive to her directions. But there was a dull cloud over her intellect, and a vacancy in her eyes and features. She was quiet, easily pleased, but seemed to have little volition of her own. Mrs. Dunster thought that if they could but

get her away from that spot, it might rouse her mind from its sleep. But perhaps the sleep was better than the awaking might be; however, the removal came, though in a more awful way than was looked for. The miner, who had continued to drink more and more, and seemed to have almost estranged himself from his home, staying away in his drinking bouts for a week or more together, was one day blasting a rock in the mine, and being half-stupified with beer, did not take care to get out of the way of the explosion, was struck with a piece of the flying stone, and killed on the spot.

The poor widow and her children were now obliged to remove from under Wardlow-Cop. The place had been a sad one to her: the death of her husband, though he had been latterly far from a good one, and had left her with the children in deep poverty, was a fresh source of severe grief to her. Her religious mind was struck down with a weight of melancholy by the reflection of the life he had led, and the sudden way in which he had been summoned into eternity. When she looked forward what a prospect was there for her children! it was impossible for her to maintain them from her small earnings, and as to Nancy, would she ever be able to earn her own bread, and protect herself in the world?

It was amid such reflections that Mrs. Dunster quitted this deep, solitary, and, to her, fatal valley, and took up her abode in the village of Cressbrook. Here she had one small room, and by her own labors, and some aid from the parish, she managed to support herself and the children. For seven years she continued her laborious life, assisted by the labor of the two daughters, who also seamed stockings, and in the evenings were instructed by her. Her girls were now thirteen and fifteen years of age: Jane was a tall and very pretty girl of her years; she was active, industrious, and sweet-tempered: her constant affection for poor Nancy was something as admirable as it was singular. Nancy had now confirmed good health, but it had affected her mother to perceive that, since the catastrophe of her brother's death, and the cruel treatment of her father at that time, she had never grown in any degree as she ought; she was short, stout, and of a pale and very plain countenance. It could not be now said that she was deficient in mind, but she was slow in its operations. She displayed, indeed, a more than ordinary depth of reflection, and a shrewdness of observation, but the evidences of this came forth in a very quiet way, and were observable only to her mother and sister. To all besides she was extremely reserved: she was timid to excess, and shrunk from public notice into the society of her mother and sister. There

was a feeling abroad in the neighborhood that she was "not quite right," but the few who were more discerning, shook their heads, and observed, "Right she was not, poor thing, but it was not want of sense; she had more of that than most."

And such was the opinion of her mother and sister. They perceived that Nancy had received a shock of which she must bear the effects through life. Circumstances might bring her feeble but sensitive nerves much misery. She required to be guarded and sheltered from the rudeness of the world, and the mother trembled to think how much she might be exposed to them. But in everything that related to sound judgment, they knew that she surpassed not only them, but any of their acquaintance. If any difficulty had to be decided, it was Nancy who pondered on it, and perhaps at some moment when least expected, pronounced an opinion that might be taken as confidently as an oracle.

The affection of the two sisters was something beyond the ties of this world. Jane had watched and attended to her from the time of her constitutional injury with a love that never seemed to know a moment's weariness or change; and the affection which Nancy evinced for her was equally intense and affecting. She seemed to hang on her society for her very life. Jane felt this, and vowed that they would never quit one another. The mother sighed. How many things, she thought might tear asunder that beautiful resolve.

But now they were of an age to obtain work in the mill. Indeed, Jane could have had employment there long before, but she would not quit her sister till she could go with her—and now there they went. The proprietor, who knew the case familiarly, so ordered it that the two sisters should work near each other; and that poor Nancy should be as little exposed to the rudeness of the work-people as possible. But at first so slow and awkward were Nancy's endeavors, and such an effect had it on her frame that it was feared she must give it up. This would have been a terrible calamity; and the tears of the two sisters, and the benevolence of the employer, enabled Nancy to pass through this severe ordeal. In a while she acquired sufficient dexterity, and thenceforward went through her work with great accuracy and perseverance. As far as any intercourse with the work-people was concerned, she might be said to be dumb. Scarcely ever did she exchange a word with any one, but she returned kind nods and smiles: and every morning and evening and at dinner-time, the two sisters might be seen going to and fro, side by side,—Jane often talking with some of them; the little, odd-looking sister walking silent and listening.

Five more years and Jane was a young woman. Amid her companions, who were few of them above the middle size, she had a tall and striking appearance. Her father had been a remarkably tall and strong man, and she possessed something of his stature, though none of his irritable disposition. She was extremely pretty, of a blooming fresh complexion, and graceful form. She was remarkable for the sweetness of her expression, which was the index of her disposition. By her side still went that odd, broad-built, but still pale and little sister. Jane was extremely admired by the young men of the neighborhood, and had already many offers, but she listened to none. "Where I go must Nancy go," she said to herself, "and of whom can I be sure?"

Of Nancy no one took notice. Her pale, somewhat large features, her thoughtful silent look, and her short, stout figure, gave you an idea of a dwarf, though she could not strictly be called one. None could think of Nancy as a wife,—where Jane went she must go; the two clung together with one heart and soul. The blow which deprived them of their brother seemed to bind them inseparably together.

Mrs. Dunster, besides her seaming, at which, in truth, she earned a miserable sum, had now for some years been the post-woman from the village to the Bull's Head, where the mail, going on to Tideswell, left the letter-bag. Thither and back, wet or dry, summer or winter, she went every day, the year round. With her earnings, and those of the girls, she kept a neat, small cottage; and the world went well with them, as the world goes on the average with the poor. Cramps and rheumatisms she began to feel sensibly from so much exposure to rain and cold; but the never-varying and firm affection of her two children was a balm in her cup which made her contented with everything else.

When Jane was about two-and-twenty, poor Mrs. Dunster, seized with rheumatic fever, died. On her death-bed she said to Jane, "Thou wilt never desert poor Nancy; and that's my comfort. God has been good to me. After all my trouble, he has given me this faith, that come weal come woe, so long as thou has a home, Nancy will never want one. God bless thee for it! God bless you both; and he will bless you?" So saying, Betty Dunster breathed her last.

The events immediately following her death did not seem to bear out her dying faith; for the two poor girls were obliged to give up their cottage. There was a want of cottages. Not half of the work-people could be entertained in this village, they went to and fro for many miles. Jane and Nancy were now obliged to do the same. Their cottage was wanted for an overlooker, and they removed to Tideswell, three miles

off. They had thus six miles a day to walk, besides standing at their work; but they were young, and had companions. In Tideswell they were more cheerful. They had a snug little cottage; were near a meeting; and found friends. They did not complain. Here, again, Jane Dunster attracted great attention, and a young, thriving grocer paid his addresses to her. It was an offer that made Jane take time to reflect. Every one said it was an opportunity not to be neglected; but Jane weighed in her mind, "Will he keep faith in my compact with Nancy?" Though her admirer made every vow on the subject, Jane paused and determined to take the opinion of Nancy. Nancy thought for a day, and then said, "Dearest sister, I don't feel easy; I fear that from some cause it would not do in the end."

Jane from that moment gave up the idea of the connection. There might be those who would suspect Nancy of a selfish bias in the advice she gave; but Jane knew that no such feeling influenced her pure soul. For one long year the two sisters traversed the hills between Cressbrook and Tideswell. But they had companions, and it was pleasant in the summer months. But winter came, and then it was a severe trial. To rise in the dark, and traverse those wild and bleak hills; to go through snow and drizzle, and face the sharpest winds in winter, was no trifling matter. Before winter was over, the two young women began seriously to revolve the chances of a nearer residence, or a change of employ. There were no few who blamed Jane excessively for the folly of refusing the last good offer. There were even more than one who, in the hearing of Nancy, blamed her. Nancy was thoughtful, agitated, and wept. "If I can, dear sister," she said, "have advised you to your injury, how shall I forgive myself? What *shall* become of me?"

But Jane clasped her sister to her heart, and said, "No! no! dearest sister, you are not to blame. I feel you are right; let us wait, and we shall see!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE COURTSHIP AND ANOTHER SHIP.

ONE evening, as the two sisters were hastening along the road through the woods on their way homewards, a young farmer drove up in his spring-cart, cast a look at them, stopped, and said: "Young women, if you are going my way, I shall be glad of your company. You are quite welcome to ride."

The sisters looked at each other. "Dunna be afereed," said the young farmer; "my name's James Cheshire. I'm well known

in these parts: you may trust yersens wi' me, if it's agreeable."

To James's surprise, Nancy said, "No sir, we are not afraid; we are much obliged to you."

The young farmer helped them up into the cart, and away they drove.

"I'm afraid we shall crowd you," said Jane.

"Not a bit of it," replied the young farmer. "There's room for three bigger nor us on this seat, and I'm no ways tedious."

The sisters saw nothing odd in his use of the word "tedious," as strangers would have done; they knew it merely meant "not at all particular." They were soon in active talk. As he had told them who he was, he asked them in their turn if they worked at the mills there. They replied in the affirmative, and the young man said:—

"I thought so. I've seen you sometimes going along together. I noticed you because you seemed so sisterly like, and you are sisters I reckon."

They said "Yes."

"I've a good spanking horse, you see," said James Cheshire. "I shall get over the ground rayther faster, nor you done a-foot, eh? My word, though, it must be nation cold on these bleak hills i' winter."

The sisters assented, and thanked the young farmer for taking them up.

"We are rather late," said they, "for we looked in on a friend, and the rest of the mill-hands were gone on."

"Well," said the young farmer, "never mind that. I fancy Bess, my mare here, can go a little faster nor they can. We shall very likely be at Tidser as soon as they are."

"But you are not going to Tidser," said Jane, "your farm is just before us there."

"Yay, I'm going to Tidser though. I've a bit of business to do there before I go hom."

On drove the farmer at what he called a spanking rate; presently they saw the young mill-people on the road before them.

"There are your companions," said James Cheshire, "we shall cut past them like a flash of lightning."

"Oh," exclaimed Jane Dunster, "what will they say at seeing us riding here?" and she blushed brightly.

"Say?" said the young farmer, smiling, "never mind what they'll say; depend upon it, they'd like to be here theirsens."

James Cheshire cracked his whip. The horse flew along. The party of the young mill-hands turned round, and on seeing Jane and Nancy in the cart, uttered exclamations of surprise.

"My word, though!" said Mary Smedley, a fresh buxom lass, somewhat inclined to stoutness.

"Well, if ever!" cried smart little Hannah Bowyer.



"Nay, then, what next?" said Tetty Wilton, a tall, thin girl of very good looks.

The two sisters nodded and smiled to their companions; Jane still blushing rosilily, but Nancy sitting as pale and as gravely as if they were going on some solemn business.

The only notice the farmer took was to turn with a broad smiling face, and shout to them, "Wouldn't you like to be here too?"

"Ay, take us up," shouted a number of voices together; but the farmer cracked his whip, and giving them a nod and a dozen smiles in one, said, "I can't stay. Ask the next farmer that comes up."

With this they drove on; the young farmer very merry and full of talk. They were soon by the side of his farm. "There's a flock of sheep on the turnips there," he said, proudly; "they're not to be beaten on this side Ashbourne. And there are some black oxen, going for the night to the strawyard. Jolly fellows, those—eh? But I reckon you don't understand much of farming stock."

"No," said Jane, and was again surprised at Nancy adding, "I wish we did. I think a farmer's life must be the very happiest of any."

"You think so?" said the farmer, turning and looking at her earnestly, and evidently with some wonder. "You are right," said he. "You little ones are knowing ones. You are right; it's the life for a king."

They were at the village. "Pray stop," said Jane, "and let us get down, I would not for the world go up to the village thus. It would make such a talk!"

"Talk, who cares for talk?" said the farmer; "wont the youngsters we left on the road talk?"

"Quite enough," said Jane.

"And are you afraid of talk?" said the farmer to Nancy.

"I'm not afraid of it when I don't provoke it willfully," said Nancy; "but we are poor girls, and can't afford to lose even the good word of our acquaintance. You've been very kind in taking us up on the road, but to drive us to our door would cause such wonder as would perhaps make us wish we had not been obliged to you."

"Blame me, if you ar'n't right again!" said the farmer, thoughtfully. "These are scandal-loving times, and th' neebors might plague you. That's a deep head of yourn, though.—Nancy, I think your sister caw'd you. Well, here I stop then."

He jumped down and helped them out.

"If you will drive on first," said Jane, "we will walk on after, and we are greatly obliged to you."

"Nay," said the young man, "I shall turn again here."

"But you've business."

"Oh! my business was to drive you here—that's all."

James Cheshire was mounting his cart,

when Nancy stepped up, and said: "Excuse me, Sir, but you'll meet the mill-people on your return, and it will make them talk all the more as you have driven us past your farm. Have you no business that you can do in Tidsar, Sir?"

"Gad! but thou'rt right again! Ay, I'll go on!" and with a crack of his whip, and a "Good night!" he whirled into the village before them.

No sooner was he gone than Nancy, pressing her sister's arm to her side, said: "There's the right man at last, dear Jane."

"What?" said Jane, yet blushing deeply at the same time, and her heart beating quicker against her side. "What ever are you talking of, Nancy? That young farmer fall in love with a mill-girl?"

"He's done it," said Nancy; "I see it in him. I feel it in him. And I feel, too, that he is true and staunch as steel."

Jane was silent. They walked on in silence. Jane's own heart responded to what Nancy had said; she thought again and again on what he said. "I have seen you sometimes," "I noticed you because you seemed so sisterly." "He must have a good heart," thought Jane; "but then he can never think of a poor mill-girl like me."

The next morning they had to undergo plenty of raillery from their companions. We will pass that over. For several days, as they passed to and fro, they saw nothing of the young farmer. But one evening, as they were again alone, having stayed at the same acquaintance's as before, the young farmer popped his head over a stone wall and said, "Good evening to you, young women." He was soon over the wall, and walked on with them to the end of the town. On the Sunday at the chapel Jane saw Nancy's grave face fixed on some object steadily, and, looking in the same direction, was startled to see James Cheshire. Again her heart beat pit-a-pat, and she thought "Can he be really thinking of me!"

The moment chapel was over, James Cheshire was gone, stopping to speak to no one. Nancy again pressed the arm of Jane to her side as they walked home, and said,—"I was not wrong." Jane only replied by returning her affectionate pressure.

Some days after, as Nancy Dempster was coming out of a shop in the evening after their return home from the mill, James Cheshire suddenly put his hand on her shoulder, and on her turning shook her hand cordially, and said, "Come along with me a bit. I must have a little talk with you."

Nancy consented without remark or hesitation. James Cheshire walked on quickly till they came near the fine old church which strikes travellers as so superior to the place in which it is located; when he slackened his pace, and taking Nancy's hand, began in a most friendly manner to tell her how

much he liked her and her sister. That, to make a short matter of it, as was his way, he had made up his mind that the woman of all others in the world that would suit him for a wife was her sister. "But before I said so to her, I thought I would say so to you, Nancy, for you are so sensible, I'm sure you will say what is best for us all."

Nancy manifested no surprise, but said calmly. "You are a well-to-do farmer, Mr. Cheshire. You have friends of property; my sister, and—"

"Ay, and a mill-girl; I know all that. I've thought it all over, and so far you are right again, my little one. But just hear what I've got to say. I'm no fool, though I say it. I've an eye in my head and a head on my shoulders, eh?"

Nancy smiled.

"Well now, it's not *any* mill-girl; mind you, it's not *any* mill-girl; no, nor perhaps another in the kingdom, that would do for me. I don't think mill-girls are in the main cut out for farmers' wives, any more than farmers' wives are fit for mill-girls; but you see, I've got a notion that your sister is not only a very farrantly lass, but that she's one that has particular good sense, though not so deep as you, Nancy, neither. Well, I've a notion that she can turn her hand to anything, and that she's a heart to do it, when it's a duty. Isn't that so, eh? And if it is so, then Jane Dunster's the lass for me; that is, if it's quite agreeable."

Nancy pressed James Cheshire's hand, and said, "You are very kind."

"Not a bit of it," said James.

"Well," continued Nancy; "but I would have you to consider what your friends will say; and whether you will not be made unhappy by them."

"Why, as for that," said James Cheshire, interrupting her, "mark me, Miss Dunster. I don't ask my friends for anything. I can farm my own farm; buy my own cattle; drive my spring cart, without any advice or assistance of theirs; and therefore I don't think I shall ask their advice in the matter of a wife, eh? No, no, on that score I'm made up. My name's Independent, and at a word, the only living thing I mean to ask advice of is yourself. If you, Miss Dunster, approve of the match, it's settled, as far as I'm concerned."

"Then so far," said Nancy, "as you and my sister are concerned, without reference to worldly circumstances—I approve it with all my heart. I believe you to be as good and honest as I know my sister to be. Oh! Mr. Cheshire! she is one of ten thousand."

"Well, I was sure of it," said the young farmer; "and so now you must tell your sister all about it; and if all's right, chalk me a white chalk inside of my gate as you go past it th' morning, and to-morrow evening I'll come up and see you."

Here the two parted with a cordial shake of the hand. The novel signal of an accepted love was duly discovered by James Cheshire on his gate-post, when he issued forth at day-break, and that evening he was sitting at tea with Jane and Nancy in the little cottage, having brought in his cart a basket of eggs, apples, fresh butter, and a pile of the richest pikelets (crumpets) country pikelets, very different to town made ones, for tea.

We need not follow out the courtship of James Cheshire and Jane Dunster. It was cordial and happy. James insisted that both the sisters should give immediate notice to quit the mill-work, to spare themselves the cold and severe walks which the winter now occasioned them. The sisters had improved their education in their evenings. They were far better read and informed than most farmers' daughters. They had been, since they came to Tideswell, teachers in the Sunday-school. There was comparatively little to be learned in the farm-house for the wife in winter, and James Cheshire therefore proposed to the sisters to go for three months to Manchester into a wholesale house, to learn as much as they could of the plain sewing and cutting out of household linen. The person in question made up all sorts of household linen, sheets, pillow-cases, shirts, and other things; in fact, a great variety of articles. Through an old acquaintance he got them introduced there, avowedly to prepare them for housekeeping. It was a sensible step, and answered well. At spring, to cut short opposition from his own relatives, which began to show itself, for these things did not fail to be talked of, James Cheshire got a license, and proceeding to Manchester, was then and there married, and came home with his wife and sister.

The talk and gossip which this wedding made all round the country, was no little, but the parties themselves were well satisfied with their mutual choice, and were happy. As the spring advanced, the duties of the household grew upon Mrs. Cheshire. She had to learn the art of cheese-making, butter-making, of all that relates to poultry, calves, and household management. But in these matters she had the aid of an old servant who had done all this for Mr. Cheshire, since he began farming. She took a great liking to her mistress, and showed her with hearty good-will how everything was done; and as Jane took a deep interest in it, she rapidly made herself mistress of the management of the house, as well as of the house itself. She did not disdain, herself, to take a hand at the churn, that she might be familiar with the whole process of butter-making, and all the signs by which the process is conducted to a successful issue. It was soon seen that no farmer's wife could produce a firmer, fresher,



sweeter pound of butter. It was neither *sweetened* by too hasty churning, nor spoiled, as is too often the case, by the butter-milk or by water being left in it, for want of well kneading and pressing. It was deliciously sweet, because the cream was carefully put in the cleanest vessels and well attended to. Mrs. Cheshire, too, might daily be seen kneeling by the side of the cheese-pan, separating the curd, taking off the whey, filling the cheese-vat with the curd, and putting the cheese herself into press. Her cheese-chamber displayed as fine a set of well-salted, well-colored, well-turned and regular cheeses as ever issued from that or any other farm-house.

James Cheshire was proud of his wife; and Jane herself found a most excellent helper in Nancy. Nancy took particularly to housekeeping; saw that all the rooms were exquisitely clean; that everything was in nice repair; that not only the master and mistress, but the servants, had their food prepared in a wholesome and attractive manner. The eggs she stored up; and as fruit came into season, had it collected for market, and for a judicious household use. She made the tea and coffee morning and evening, and did everything but preside at the table. There was not a farm-house for twenty miles round that wore an air of so much brightness and evident good management as that of James Cheshire. For Nancy, from the first moment of their acquaintance, he had conceived a most profound respect. In all cases that required counsel, though he consulted freely with his wife, he would never decide till they had had Nancy's opinion and sanction.

And James Cheshire prospered. But, spite of this, he did not escape the persecution from his relations that Nancy had foreseen. On all hands he found coldness. None of them called on him. They felt scandalized at his *evening* himself, as they called it, to a mill-girl. He was taunted when they met at market, with having been caught with a pretty face; and told that they thought he had more sense than to marry a dressed doll with a witch by her side.

At first James Cheshire replied with a careless waggery, "The pretty face makes capital butter, though, eh! The dressed doll turns out a tolerable dairy, eh! Better," added James, "than a good many can, that I know, who have neither pretty faces nor have much taste in dressing to crack off."

The allusion to Nancy's dwarfish plainness was what peculiarly provoked James Cheshire. He might have laughed at the criticisms on his wife, though the envious neighbor's wives did say that it was the old servant and not Mrs. Cheshire who produced such fine butter and cheese, for

wherever she appeared, spite of envy and detraction, her lovely person and quiet good sense, and the growing rumor of her good management, did not fail to produce a due impression. And James had prepared to laugh it off; but it would not do. He found himself getting every now then angry and unsettled by it. A coarse jest on Nancy at any time threw him into a desperate fit of indignation. The more the superior merit of his wife was known, the more seemed to increase the envy and venom of some of his relatives. He saw, too, that it had an effect on his wife. She was often sad, and sometimes in tears.

One day, when this occurred, James Cheshire said, as they sat at tea. "I've made up my mind. Peace in this life is a jewel. Better is a dinner of herbs with peace, than a stalled ox with strife. Well now, I'm determined to have peace. Peace and luv," said he, looking affectionately at his wife and Nancy, "peace and luv, by God's blessing, have settled down on this house; but there are stings here and stings there when we go out of doors. We must not only have peace and luv in the house, but peace all round it. So I've made up my mind. I'm for America!"

"For America!" exclaimed Jane. "Surely you cannot be in earnest."

"I never was more in earnest in my life," said James Cheshire. "It is true I do very well on this farm here, though it's a cow-dish situation; but from all I can learn, I can do much better in America. I can there farm a much better farm of my own. We can have a much finer climate than this Peak country, and our countrymen still about us. Now, I want to know what makes a man's native land pleasant to him?—the kindness of his relations and friends. But then, if a man's relations are not kind?—if they get a conceit into them, that because they are relations they are to choose a man's wife for him, and sting him and snort at him because he has a will of his own?—why, then I say, God send a good big her-ring-pool between me and such relations! My relations, by way of showing their natural affection, spit spite and bitterness. You, dear wife and sister, have none of yours to spite you. In the house we have peace and luv. Let us take the peace and luv, and leave the bitterness behind."

There was a deep silence.

"It is a serious proposal," at length said Jane, with tears in her eyes.

"What says Nancy?" asked James.

"It is a serious proposal," said Nancy, "but it is good. I feel it so."

There was another deep silence; and James Cheshire said, "Then it is decided."

"Think of it," said Jane, earnestly,—  
"think well of it."

"I have thought of it long and well, my



dear. There are some of these chaps that call me relation that I shall not keep my hands off, if I stay amongst them,—and I fain would. But for the present I will say no more; but," added he, rising and bringing a book from his desk, "here is a book by one Morris Birkbeck,—read it, both of you, and then let me know your minds."

The sisters read. On the following Lady-day, James Cheshire had turned over his farm advantageously to another, and he, his wife, Nancy, and the old servant, Mary Spendlove, all embarked at Liverpool, and transferred themselves to the United States, and then to the State of Illinois. Five-and-twenty years have rolled over since that day. We could tell a long and curious story of the fortunes of James Cheshire and his family; from the days when, half repenting of his emigration and his purchase, he found himself in a rough country, amid

rough and spiteful squatters, and lay for months with a brace of pistols under his pillow, and a great sword by his bedside for fear of robbery and murder. But enough, that at this moment, James Cheshire, in a fine cultivated country, sees his ample estates cultivated by his sons, while as Colonel and Magistrate he dispenses the law and receives the respectful homage of the neighborhood. Nancy Dunster, now styled Mrs. Dunster, the Mother in Israel—the promoter of schools and the counsellor of old and young—still lives. Years have improved rather than deteriorated her short and stout exterior. The long exercise of wise thoughts and the play of benevolent feelings, have given even a sacred beauty to her homely features. The dwarf has disappeared, and there remains instead, a grave but venerable matron,—honored like a queen.



# FORTUNE WILDRED.

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A GREAT many years ago—two-and-twenty years to-night—I well remember what a cold, wet night it was, with a thick sleet driving against the windows, and a melancholy, moaning wind creeping through the leafless branches. It had been quite a sad winter time to us at home—the only sad one I had ever known, for it was just two or three weeks after the accident had happened that first laid me on my couch, and only a few days before, my father had told me that I should never be able to rise from it any more. It had been a heavy blow to us all.

We sat together in the drawing-room all the long evening, my father, and my mother, and I—my sister Kate had gone the day before to some friends of ours in the country. One gets so soon used to misfortunes and disappointments when just a little time has passed; but, at the first, they are often so hard to bear, and I think that never, at any time, did I feel such sorrow at the thought that I must be an invalid my whole life as I did that night. I was only a girl—not fifteen yet; and, at that age we are so full of bright dreams about the future, looking forward with such clear, joyous hopefulness to the world that is just beginning to open before us, stretching out our hands so eagerly to the golden light that we think we see in the far distance. It was so hard to have the bright view shut out for ever, to have the bright dreams fade away, to have all the hopes that to me had made the thought of life so beautiful, torn from me for ever in one moment.

I had borne the knowledge of it all quite calmly at first; it was only now that I thought I really felt and knew all that I was losing. But, thank God, my life has not been what in my faithlessness I thought, that night, it would be; thank God, that the whole bitterness of those few hours' thought has never come to me as it did then, again.

Early in the evening my father had been reading to us aloud; but since he ceased, no word had been spoken in the room. He

had been writing for the last two hours; my mother, sitting by the fire, was reading. The whole house was silent; and from without, the only sounds that came to us were the wind howling through the trees, and the cold rain dashing on the windows—both cheerless sounds enough to hear. It was indeed a night for melancholy thoughts; and to one ill and weak as I was then, perhaps it was to be forgiven that, thinking of the future and the past, looking back upon the happy days that were gone, and forward to where the sunless clouds hung so heavily, I should scarcely be able to press back the tears that tried to blind me.

For when we are very young we shrink so from feeling prison-bound: we pray so earnestly, that if sorrow must come to us, it may rather burst in sudden storm upon us, and, passing away, leave the blue sky clear again, than that our whole life should be wrapped up in a cold gray shroud, through which no deep sorrow can ever pierce into our hearts—no deep joy ever come to gladden us.

And in that gray shroud I thought that my life was to lie hidden and withered; and now, while as yet it was only closing over me—while with passionate resistance I would still have struggled to tear it back, I felt that my hands were bound.

A little thing will sometimes serve to divert our thoughts, even when they very much engross us; and so it was that night that I was suddenly startled out of the midst of my reverie by two loud sharp knocks upon the street door—a sound certainly by no means uncommon. And perhaps, if nothing more had followed, I might have fallen again into my former thoughts; but, as I lay for a few moments listening, the door was opened, and then there followed such strange hurried exclamations—half of surprise, half of alarm—mingled with such apparently irresistible bursts of laughter, that my first dull interest began rapidly to change into a far more active feeling.

“My love, what’s that?” asked my father, without looking up.



"I can't imagine!" my mother answered, in a puzzled tone, laying down her book.

Just at this moment we heard a quick step running up the stairs, and all our eyes with one accord turned to the door, which in two or three minutes was burst open, and to our extreme amazement, in rushed our servant Ann with a little half-naked child in her arms. Yes, that little creature standing on the step, was the only thing to be seen when she had opened the door.

"Upon my word this is going too far," my father exclaimed, angrily, when he had heard Ann's story. "It isn't two months since the same trick was played in town. Ann, call Tom to get a lantern immediately, and follow me. We must make a search; though indeed it's hopeless to think of catching any one on such a night as this. Whoever has done it is out of reach by this time. My dear," he turned round as he was hurrying from the room, "don't do anything with the child until I come back; I'm afraid she's ill," and he closed the door.

I shall never forget what a poor little object it was. It had scarcely an atom of clothing on it—just a torn old frock that would hardly hang together, and its poor little white shoulders and arms were all bare, and wet with the heavy rain. Her pretty fair hair was wet too, but her face was what attracted and astonished me most, for in spite of the bitter coldness of the night, it was glowing like fire, with a spot of the brightest scarlet on each cheek, and her large blue eyes so unnaturally bright that it was quite painful to look at them. Yet such a sweet face it was!

My mother made her kneel beside me on my couch, and we talked to her, and kissed her, and taking off the old wet frock, wrapped my mother's shawl around her; but all the time, and though she was certainly more than two years old, she remained as perfectly unmoved as though she had been a little statue, only those great bright eyes were fixed upon my face, until I began to get absolutely frightened at her.

In about twenty minutes my father returned from his useless search.

"We can do nothing more to-night," he said, in a tone of considerable vexation, as he joined us again. "Poor child, she's very feverish indeed; why, exposure on such a night is enough to kill her. My love, you must put her to bed; there's no help for it, and I'll see what I can do for her. But really it's a little too much to expect that all the sick children of the neighborhood are not only to be cured for nothing, but to be housed too, by the physician." And my father left the room, to change his wet garments, in no very contented state of mind.

My mother put out her hands to lift the child from my side, and then for the first

time a moaning sound broke from her, and leaning forward she caught my dress with her little hands, and held it tight, half crying, as if she feared to go away. I pressed her to me, and clasped my arms around her. I couldn't help it—and she let me do it, and laid down her head upon my bosom, the dear child! with that plaintive moaning sound again. I was almost weeping myself, half with pity, half with love—for I loved her so much already, as we love all things that cling to us, all things that—~~weaker than ourselves—~~appeal to us for protection. And so, for I could not bear that against her will she should be made to leave me, still keeping her in my arms, I had the couch wheeled into my bedroom: and there, in Kate's bed we laid her, poor little weary suffering thing.

It would be too long to tell you all about her illness, for she was ill for many weeks; how patient she was; how anxious we all were for her; how, in spite of a few cross words at first, my kind father tended her with as much care as ever he bestowed upon his wealthiest patient; how my dear mother sat up night after night with her, as though she had been her own child; how the little thing crept so into all our hearts, that when at last one evening my father pronounced her out of danger, even his voice was broken with emotion, and we were fairly crying—both my mother and I.

Nor will I trouble you with an account of all the fruitless search that was made to discover who she was or where she came from, but one thing I must mention, because it perplexed us very much, and added to our difficulty in deciding how to dispose of her. It was this: that we began to suspect—what at first had never entered our heads—that she had been stolen, and was not a poor woman's child. It was her own dim recollections of past things that gave rise to this supposition, but the fever had so confused all things in her poor little head, that we never could reach any certainty upon the subject.

Well, the end of all was that we could not part from her, for we had all grown to love her so well already, and we knew that if we sent her away from us, the only place that would receive her was the workhouse. So it was quite settled at last that she should stay with us, and because she had taken to me so much from the first, they pronounced, laughing, that she should be my child; and I was so happy.

I called her Fortune—Fortune Wildred we baptized her—that, should she never find her own surname, she might at least have some proper claim to ours. Of course she must have had a Christian name before; indeed she said she remembered it, and declared that it was Willie; but, Willie seemed so odd a name to give a girl, that we

agreed it would not do, and then I chose Fortune.

My little Fortune—she was so dear to me, and she loved me too, so well? Young as I was, our relation to each other became in many things like mother and child. It was strange that, of her own accord, from the first she called me Aunt Dinah. And I so soon grew accustomed to the title, and so soon too fell quite naturally into calling her my child, for though yet but a girl in years, I was becoming a woman very quickly, as I should think must often be the case with those who have their destiny in life fixed as early as mine was, for I had no other outward change to look forward to as most girls have, and all my business was to settle down and be content.

—My life, I often think, might have been lonely and sad without my child, but with her I was very happy. It was as if I lived again in her, for all the hopes and wishes that my illness had crushed, came into life again, but not for myself now. It was for her that I dreamed, and hoped, and thought—for the little bright-eyed child who loved to lie beside me, with her white arms round my neck, and her soft cheek pressed on mine; who loved—Heaven bless her—to be with me always; who never was so happy as when, even for hours, we two would be left alone together, and, with the perfect confidence that only children have, she would talk to me of all things that came in her mind, gladdening my very heart with the loving things she said. They all loved her, but none as I did, for she loved none of them so well. They used to say that I should spoil her, but I never did; she was not made to be spoiled, my little Fortune, my sunny, bright-haired child!

She was my pupil for the first few years, and such dear lessons they were that we used to have together—dear to both of us, though most to me. She was so good and gentle, so sorry if she ever grieved me, so eager to be good and be forgiven again—as though my heart did not forgive her always, even before she asked it—so loving always. She never wearied of being with me—the kind child—not even when, as happened sometimes, I was too ill to bear her childish merriment, and she would have to sit quietly in my room, and lower her sweet clear voice when she spoke to me, for she would hang upon my neck then too, and whisper to me how she loved me. Ah, I never shall forget it all—I never shall forget how good my little Fortune was to me.

I may as well mention here, that soon after it was settled she should stay with us, we had a little miniature portrait of her taken, which I have worn ever since as a locket round my neck. We did this on the chance that it might possibly serve on some future day as a means of identifying her.

Here is the little picture now; it is so like her, as I have seen her a thousand times, with her sunny veil of curls around her.

The years went on, and brought some changes with them—one change which was very sad—my mother's death. It came upon us suddenly, at a time when we were least thinking of sorrow, for when her short illness began we were preparing for my sister Kate's marriage. It was long before the gloom and grief that her loss threw upon our little household passed away, for she was dearly loved amongst us, and had been a most noble and true-hearted woman.

When Kate had been married about a year, my father withdrew from practice, and, to be near her, we removed to Derbyshire, and he, and I, and Fortune, kept house there, in a quiet cheerful way together. And so the years went on until my child was about seventeen.

In this new part of the country we had not many neighbors with whom we were intimate, but there was one family, who, since our first coming, had shown us much kindness. Their name was Beresford, and they consisted of a father and mother, and one son, who was at college. They were wealthy people, with a good deal of property in the county. When we first knew them I had not been without a suspicion—I almost think it was a hope, that Arthur Beresford and my Fortune might one day fall in love with one another; but it was not to be, for as they grew up, I saw that there was no thought of more than a common friendly love between them; and, indeed, boys of one-and-twenty are generally occupied with other things than falling in love, and girls of seventeen, I think, generally suppose that one-and-twenty is too young for them to have anything to do with, as no doubt it very often is. So they remained good friends, and nothing more.

I remember well Arthur Beresford's return from college two or three months before he came of age, and how, on the day after—a bright June morning it was—he burst into our drawing-room with a gay exclamation, "Here I am, Aunt Dinah, and free for the next four months!" and coming up to me, took both my hands in his, and looked so gay, and so happy, and so handsome, that it did me good only to look at him. He was in very high spirits indeed, for not only had he gained his freedom, as he called it, but he had succeeded in bringing back with him his cousin, Nevill Erlington, a fellow and tutor at Oxford, who had done him, so he said, such services during his career there, that had it not been for him he should never have been the happy fellow he was there, which, whether it was as true as he thought it or not, I liked the boy for saying and thinking.

And one or two days afterwards, Nevill



Erlington came with Mr. Beresford and Arthur to call on us. He was six or seven years older than Arthur, and neither so lively nor so handsome, but he had a firm, broad, thoughtful brow, and deep lustrous eyes, and a voice so deep, and rich, and soft, that it was like the sound of music to hear him speak. I liked him from the first—we all did—and it was not long before he became an almost daily visitor at our house, coming sometimes alone, on the excuse—I knew it was but an excuse—of bringing us books, or news, or some such thing, but more often with one or other of the Beresfords. Indeed, after a little time, I know that I, for one, fell quite into a habit of missing him if ever a day passed without his coming, for his quiet, gentle presence had in it a great charm to me, and he had fallen so kindly and naturally into my ways, that I had felt, almost from the first day, that he was not a stranger but a friend.

Nor was I the only one who watched for his daily visits, or felt lonely when he did not come. My dear child seldom spoke much of him when he was away; even when he was with us she was often very quiet, but I knew soon that in both their hearts a deep, true love was growing up, and that my darling would one day be Nevill's wife. And he deserved her, and she him. Timid as she was now, I knew that it would not be always so: I knew that presently when all was understood between them, her present reserve would pass away, and my Fortune, as she really was, with her bright, sunny gaiety, with her graceful, hoping woman's nature, with her deeply-loving, faithful heart, would stand beside him, to illumine and to brighten his whole life. Such happy days those were while these two young hearts were drawing to each other—happy to them and me, though over my joy there was still one little cloud.

Mr. and Mrs. Beresford were the only persons amongst our new friends to whom I had told my Fortune's story. I did not feel that it was a thing I needed to tell to every one; but now I was anxious that Nevill should know it, and felt uneasy as day after day passed, and kept him still in ignorance. But indeed I was perplexed what to do, for he and I were almost never alone, and in the state in which matters were yet between him and Fortune, it would have been premature and even indelicate to ask Mrs. Beresford to interfere. There was only one opportunity I had for speaking to him, and that I lost. I remember that day well. My father and Fortune had gone after dinner to my sister Kate's, expecting to be back in an hour, and when the hour had nearly elapsed, Nevill came in alone, bringing a request that they would return with him to spend the evening at the Beresfords.

I thought they would soon be in, so he willingly agreed to wait; and sitting beside me at the open window, he presently began—it was the first time he had ever done so—to talk of Fortune. It was strange; without a word of preparation or introduction, he spoke of her as only one who loved her could speak. For a moment I was startled; then I fell into his tone, and I too talked of my child as I could have done to few but him. There was no explanation between us, but each read the other's heart fully and perfectly. And, yet, not even then did I tell him Fortune's story. I longed to do it—it was on my lips again and again—but I was expecting her return with my father every moment, and I feared to be interrupted when I had once begun. So the time went past, and I was vexed with myself when it was gone, that my tale was still untold.

Though it was after sunset when they came in, Nevill persuaded them still to accompany him back. I remember well his warm though silent farewell to me that night. I remember, too, when they were all away, how long I lay and thought in the summer twilight. I ought to have been glad, and I *was* glad, but yet some low sad voice, that I thought I had hushed to silence years ago for ever, would awake in my heart again, making me break the beauty of that summer evening with my rebellious tears. It was only for a little time, for I, who had been so happy, what right had I to weep because *some* hopes had died? I pressed my tears back, praying to be forgiven, and soon the soft stillness of the night calmed me, and I thought again of my dear child, and eagerly and hopefully as ever I had done when I was young, I dreamed bright dreams for her future life. When I was young! I was but nine—and twenty now, yet how far back my youth seemed! Strange, there were scarcely two years between me and Nevill, yet how every one—how he, how I myself—looked on me as old compared with him.

It was late when they came home that night, and I thought my darling looked sad. I had thought so once or twice of late. She slept in a room opening from mine; and always came the last thing to say good-night to me. To-night, when she came, I was grieved, for she looked as if she had been weeping. She stood beside my couch—the light from behind, that streamed through the opened door, falling on bright, unbound hair, and also herself looking so pure and beautiful—my own Fortune! I kept her a few minutes by me, for I longed to cheer her; but she did not seem to care much to talk. I said something about Nevill, and she asked if he had been long here before they came.

"About an hour," I said.



"Ah! I am glad," she answered. "I was afraid my poor Aunt had been alone the whole night. It was kind of him."

"Yes, he is always kind, dear," I said.

Which she did not answer, but smiled gently to herself, and stood in silence, with my hand in hers; then suddenly she frightened me, for quickly stooping down, she laid her head upon my shoulder, and I felt her sobbing. At first she would not tell me why she wept, but whispered through her tears that it would grieve me; that I should think she was ungrateful—I, who had been so good to her, and loved her so well always. But when I pressed her earnestly; it came at last. It was because through the wide world she knew not where to seek for a father or a mother; because, to the very name she bore she had no claim, because to all but us, she said, her life had ever been a deceit, and was so still; because she felt so humbled before those she loved, knowing that she had no right they should be true to her whose first step had been a falsehood to them.

She told me this, pouring it out rapidly—passionately: and I understood it all, and far more than she told me. Alas! I might have guessed it all before.

I comforted her as I could. I told her that her first grief she must bear still—hopefully—if she could; that for the rest, she should not sorrow any longer, for all whose love she cared for should know what her history was. I told her to have courage, and I thanked her earnestly, and truly, for how she had spoken to me then; and presently, weeping still, but happier and full of love, my darling left me—left me to weep, because a grief I should have known would come had fallen on me.

I said that the Beresfords were landed proprietors, and Arthur was their only son; so his coming of age was to be a great day. Of course, I very seldom moved from home; but it had long been a promise that on this occasion we were to spend a week with them, and the time was now close at hand; indeed it was on the second day, I think, after I had had this talk with my child, that our visit was to begin. So, early on that day we went.

I have not mentioned that, for the last fortnight, besides Nevill, the Beresfords had had other visitors with them—a brother of Mrs. Beresford's—a Colonel Haughton with his wife and their two children, a little boy and girl. They had just returned from India, where, indeed, Mrs. Haughton had lived many years. She was in delicate health, and did not go out much, so that she was as yet almost a stranger to me; but the little I had seen of her, and all that Fortune had told me about her, pleased me so much that I was not at all sorry for this opportunity of knowing more of her. There was

something graceful and winning in her manner, indeed, that prepossessed most people in her favor, and there was much, both of beauty and refinement, in her face.

It was the day after we came, and a kind of preliminary excitement was through the house, for the next morning was to usher in Arthur's birth-day; and to-day Mrs. Beresford was giving a large children's party, expressly in honor of little Agnes and Henry Haughton. I think we had every child for six or seven miles round assembled together; and there had been music and dancing and a ceaseless peal of merry voices all through the long summer evening, and everybody looked gay and happy, and all went well, for not a few of the elder ones had turned themselves into children too, for the time, to aid them in their games.

It was growing late, and even the lightest feet began to long for a little rest, when from one large group that had gathered together, there came a loud call to play at forfeits; and in two or three moments, all were busy gathering pretty things together to pour into Fortune's lap; and then they merrily began the game, and laughed and clapped their hands with delight as each holder of a forfeit was proclaimed.

The most uproarious laughter had just been excited by Nevill's performance of some penalty allotted to him; and then I recollect well how he came, looking very happy, to kneel at Fortune's feet and deliver the next sentence. She held up a little ring; and, when she asked the usual question, what the possessor of it was to do, he answered gaily,

"To give us her autobiography."

There was a pause for a moment, while they waited for Fortune to declare whose the forfeit was, but she did not speak, for the ring was hers. Nevill had risen from his knees, and seeing it, he exclaimed laughing, for he knew it,

"What, Miss Wildred, has this fallen to your lot?"

She looked up hurriedly from him to me, and said, "Aunt Dinah," quickly, as if to ask me to speak. But, before I had opened my lips, Mrs. Beresford came forward, and said kindly:

"Nevill, I think it will be hardly fair to press this forfeit. We can't expect young ladies to be willing to declare their autobiographies in public, you know."

I interrupted Nevill and answered.

"But if you will take my account of Fortune's life instead of calling on her for her own, I think I can answer for her willingness to let you hear it. Shall it be so, Mr. Erlington?"

But he was eager that it should be passed over, was even vexed that any word had been said about it at all. I understood his delicacy well, and thanked him for it in my

heart, but I knew what my child's wish was, so I would not do what he asked me, but promised that when the children were away, the story should be told; and then the game went on.

It was past ten o'clock when they gathered round me to hear my child's history. There was no one there but the Beresfords, and the Haughtons, and Nevill, and ourselves. I saw that my poor child was agitated, but I would not have her either know that I guessed she was so, or that I shared her agitation, so I took out my knitting, and began working away very quietly as I talked, just glancing up now and then into one or other of my hearers' faces—into Nevill's oftenest, because there was that in the earnest look he fixed on me which seemed to ask it more than the rest.

There was not really very much to tell, and I had gone on without interruption nearly to the end, and was just telling them how I called her Fortune because we thought the name she said she had was so strange, when, as I said the word "Willie," a sudden cry rang through the room.

It fell upon my heart with a strange terror, and in an instant every eye was turned to whence it came.

Pale as death, her figure eagerly bent forward, her hand grasping Fortune's shoulder, Mrs. Haughton sat. From my child's cheek too all color had fled; motionless, like two marble figures, they fronted one another; their eyes fixed on each other's faces with a wild hope, a wild doubt in each: it lasted but a moment, then both, as by one impulse, rose. Mrs. Haughton stretched out her hands. "Mother!" burst from Fortune's lips. There was a passionate sob, and they were wrapped in one another's arms.

I saw like one in a dream—not feeling, not understanding, not believing. A giddiness came over me; a sudden dimness before my eyes; a feeling of deadly sickness, as we feel when we are fainting. There began to be a buzz of voices, but I could distinguish nothing clearly until I heard my own name spoken.

"Dinah," my father was saying hurriedly, "you have that little portrait—give it to me."

I roused myself by a great effort, and taking the locket from my bosom put it in his hand. Another moment, and there was a second cry; but this time it was a cry only of joy.

"Yes, yes!" I heard Mrs. Haughton passionately saying, in a voice all broken with emotion, "I knew it, I knew it! It is my child—my Willie—my little Willie!" and she pressed the portrait to her lips, and looked on it as even I had scarcely ever done.

Ah! I needed no other proofs. I needed nothing more than that one look to tell me I had lost my child.

Mrs. Haughton had sunk upon her seat again, and my darling was kneeling at her feet, clasping her hand and weeping. They spoke no more; they, nor any one: then, when a minute or two had passed, Colonel Haughton raised my child kindly from the ground, and placing her mother's hand in hers, led them silently together from the room.

I closed my eyes and turned away, but still the tears would force their way through the closed lids upon my cheek. And, as I wept, feeling—that night I could not help it—so lonely and so sad, a warm, firm clasp came gently and closed upon my hand. It was Nevill, who was standing by my side, and as I felt that friendly pressure, and met the look that was bent upon me, I knew that there was one at least who, rejoicing in my Fortune's joy, could yet feel sympathy for me.

It was not long before Colonel Haughton came back, and from him we learnt all that there was to tell. Mrs. Haughton, when very young, had married a Captain Moreton and accompanied him to India, where my child was born, and called after her mother, Wilhemina. But she was delicate, and the doctors said that the Indian climate would kill her; so before she was two years old, they were forced to send her home to England, to relations in the north. An English servant was sent in charge of her, and both were committed to the care of an intimate friend of theirs who was returning to England in the same vessel; but the lady died during the passage, and of neither child nor nurse were there ever more any tidings heard, except the solitary fact—which the captain proved—that they did arrive in England. It was fifteen years ago. The woman had money with her belonging to Mrs. Haughton, as well as the whole of the child's wardrobe; quite enough to tempt her to dishonesty.

And such was the history of my Fortune's birth.

I went away as soon as I could to my room, and lay there waiting for my child; for I knew that she would come. The moonlight streamed in brightly and softly, and the shadow of the trees without the window came and waved upon my couch, rocking gently to and fro, with a low music, like a song of rest. It stilled my heart, that quiet sound; and lying there alone, I prayed that I might have strength to rejoice, and not to mourn at all, and then after a long time I grew quite calm, and waited quietly.

My darling came at last, but not alone. Her mother entered the room with her, and they came together, hand in hand, up to my couch, and stood beside me, with the moonlight falling on them and shining on my child's white dress, as if it was a robe of

silver. We spoke little, but from Mrs. Haughton's lips there fell a few most gentle, earnest loving words, which sank into my heart, and gladdened me; and then she left me with my child, alone.

My darling clung around my neck and wept, and, calmer now myself, I poured out all my love upon her, and soothed her as I could, and then we talked together, and she told me all her joy. And there were some words that she said that night that I have never since forgotten, nor ever will forget—words that have cheered me often since—that live in my heart now, beautiful, distinct and clear as when she spoke them first. God bless her—my own child!

Brightly as ever the sun rose upon an August morning, did his first rays beam through our windows to welcome Arthur's birth-day. There was nothing but joy throughout the house, and happy faces welcoming each other, and gay voices, and merry laughter making the roof ring. There are a few days in our lives which stand out from all others we have ever known; days on which it seems to us as if the flood of sunlight around us is gilded with so bright a glory, that even the commonest things on which it falls, glow with a beauty we never felt before; days on which the fresh breeze passing over us, and sweeping through the green leaves overhead, whispers ever to us to cast all sorrow from our hearts, for that in the great world around us there is infinite joy and happiness and love. Such a day was this; and bright and beautiful, with the blue, clear sky, with the golden sunbeams, with the light, laughing wind, it rises in my memory now—a day never to be forgotten.

I was not very strong, and in the afternoon I had my couch moved into one of the quiet rooms, and lay there resting, with only the distant sound of gay voices reaching me now and then, and everything else quite still. I had not seen much of my child during the morning, but I know that she was happy, so I was quite content. And indeed I too, myself, was very happy, for the sunlight seemed to have pierced into my heart, and I felt so grateful, and so willing that all should be as it was.

I had lain there alone about half an hour, when I heard steps upon the garden walk without. The head of my couch was turned from the window, so I could not easily see who it was, but in a few moments they came near, and Fortune and Nevill entered the room by the low, open window.

"I was longing to see my child," I said softly, and with a few loving words she bent her head down over me, kissing me quickly many times.

Nevill stood by her side, and smiling, asked:—

"Will you not give me a welcome too?"

I said warmly, for I am sure I felt it, "You know that you are always welcome."

He pressed my hand; and after a moment's pause, half seriously and half gaily, he went on—

"Aunt Dinah, I have come to ask a boon—the greatest boon I ever asked of any one.

Will you grant it, do you think?"

I looked at him earnestly, wondering, hoping, doubting; but I could not speak, nor did he wait long for an answer; but bending his head low:

"Will you give me," he said—and the exquisite tenderness of his rich voice is with me still—"will you give me your Fortune to be ever more *my* Fortune, and my wife?"

I glanced from him to her. I saw his beaming smile as he stood by her, and her glowing cheek and downcast eyes, and then I *knew* that it was true, and tried to speak. But they were broken, weeping, most imperfect words, saying—I will know so faintly and so ill—the deep joy that was in my heart; and yet they understood me, and, whispering "God bless you!" Nevill stooped and kissed my brow, and my darling pressed me in her arms and gazing in my face with her bright tearful eyes, I saw in their blue depths a whole new world of happiness.

A few more words will tell you all the rest. My child was very young, and Nevill had little beside his fellowship to depend upon, and that of course his marriage would deprive him of. So it was settled that they should wait a year or two before they married; and at the close of the autumn they parted, Nevill—who had been some time ordained—to go to a curacy near London, and Fortune with her mother, to relations further north.

It was to me a very sad winter, for I was lonely without my child, but I looked forward hopefully, and every one was very kind. And in the spring an unexpected happiness befel us, for a living near us in Mr. Beresford's gift became vacant suddenly, and before it was quite summer again, Nevill was established as the new rector there. And then my darling and he were married.

There is a little child with dark-blue eyes and golden hair, who often makes sunshine in my room: whose merry laughter thrills my heart, whose low, sweet songs I love to hear, as nestled by my side she sings to me. They call her Dinah, and I know she is my darling's little girl; but, when I look upon her face I can forget that twenty years have passed away, and still believe she is my little Fortune, come back to be a child again.











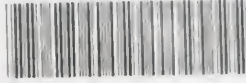


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